800

Indians on Horseback

[p. 1]

291
531
177
516

Indian women in the national dress of today with large woollen pompons on their sandals

[P. 2]
[P. 1 contains no text which is not reproduced elsewhere]

Indians On Horseback

GUSTAF BOLINDER

[Title Page]

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[P.4]

Contents

FOREWORD 9 (000)
1 TO THE INDIAN BORDER 11
2 BY CANOE ON THE CARIBBEAN 21
3 PEARLS, SALT AND SAND 36
4 TOWARDS A MIRAGE 47
5 SLAVES AND SLAVE-DEALERS 59
6 INDISCREET INVESTIGATION 68
7 LAWS WITH NO TABLETS 91
8 INNOCENCE AND THE FERTILITY DANCE 103
9 A WAKE 121
10 CONJURATION OF SPIRITS 129
11 THE BRIGANDS OF CUSINA 144
12 THE INDIANS' VENICE 163
13 FIRE IN THE RIVER-BED 173
14 GUAJIRA TODAY 181

List of Illustrations

COLOUR

Indian women in the national dress of today *Frontispiece* OOO

facing page

View of the Guajiro town at Maracaibo 40
La Teta rising above the cactus steppe 88
Typical Guajiro landscape with divi-divi trees 88
The Guajiro town at Maracaibo 136
Aurora Montiel, who represents the Indians at Congress in Caracas 184

BLACK AND WHITE

By the shore. Held by father and sister, these were the only twins we ever saw 32
Indian girls 32
A simple Indian hut 32
Our men making fire 33
Indian salt workers, men and women, at Manaure 33
Our caravan makes a temporary halt 48
Resting in the sparse shade of a divi-divi tree 48
A *casimba*, or water-hole, dug by the Indians 48
I help an old man, who had never seen matches, to light his cigar 49
Chinca, a girl of simple family, and a well-born maiden 49
Indian camp and a *mestizo* 49
Youth playing a flute 64
Little girl with beads 64
Riders 64
Majayura, the virgin confined in order to be prepared for marriage 65
Old woman spinning 65
Children are not undernourished in Macuira 65

[P.7]
[P.6 contains no text]

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	facing page
OCf Chief Mauana	80
Mauana's daughter, ceremonially painted, beside her mule	80
Work-hut with warp set up for a man's sash	81
The thin Indian dogs licked the last out of the pot	81
Indian chiefs, in ceremonial clothes	81
A *chichamaya* in full swing	96
First burial. The dead person's bier is being carried out from its shelter	96
The after-burial. A medicine man guarding the urns containing the dead person's bones	96
A dance partner	97
Indian girls in their tunics	97
Women on a journey, well wrapped up against the sun	97
A Guajiro man, dressed and painted as a woman	112
Little girl with gold beads round her neck and ankles	112
After-burial: woman weeping by the urn containing the dead man's bones	112
The medicine men liked to have a good drink before a seance	113
A *piache*, or wise woman, curing a boy by burning him with a red-hot arrow head	113
A professional mourner	128
The daily butchering	128
Warrior with poisoned arrows	129
A chief's mother surrounded by female slaves	129
Indians with a stolen goat near the Cusina Hills	144
The white man's dangerous magic: the film-camera	144
Indian camp with cactus fence	144
Guajiro women are stocky and powerfully built	145
Frontier guard—Paraguaipoa	145
Bowman	160
Mule caravan near the Indian border	160
Guajiro Indians in the leafy south	161
The Indians' Venice	161
Pile-dwellings with a kitchen garden	176
Indians wait patiently while the leader of the expedition sleeps in his hammock	176
Flock being driven over the steppe	176
The ferry-man on the Calancala River	177
Derricks in Lake Maracaibo	177

[p. 8]

Foreword

This book will take the reader to a peculiar corner of South America, the Guajira peninsula, the shores of which are washed by the warm Caribbean. It has a different climate and nature to those of other, adjacent, parts of the continent. Its inhabitants are Indians who differ largely from most of their fellows in our day, for they are warlike, proud and independent. They are the only people of mounted nomads among the natives of America and they are led by powerful chiefs. They have longest maintained their independence and their remarkable customs. They have been left in peace largely because their country is arid and unattractive, but also because they are not to be trifled with. 101 181

I have made three journeys among them. The first, in 1920, was the most exciting and fruitful. Three of us went, my wife, our photographer, Ottar Gladtvet, and I, and we remember it as though it were yesterday. It is that journey which provided the bulk of my material. I supplemented my observations of Indian life by a further short visit that my wife and I made to the peninsula in the 'thirties and by the results of some native researchers. 114 121

In 1955 I returned to Guajira, wanting to see how it was after the crisis caused by the recurrent droughts of the last decade. Almost all the cattle were said to have been killed and half the population to have perished or emigrated. When I got there, however, conditions had improved. Much was just as it always had been, and there is every indication that this fine and worth-while Indian people will overcome its difficulties and retain its individuality in many respects.

114 Apart from a few old books and what I may have written myself almost nothing has been published about these Indians until recent years. A Colombian expedition, including Roberto Pineda Giraldo, Virginia Gutierrez de Pineda Giraldo and Milciades Chaves made interesting notes. Guajira has been described historically and geographically in papers by Gregorio Hernandez de Alba, Julio Londoño and Antonio Garcia; and a work by Father José de Barranquilla should also be mentioned.

Many of the photographs used to illustrate this book were taken by myself, others are the work of Ottar Gladtvet of Oslo, our companion and photographer on the first expedition.

G.B.

[pp. 11-46 not processed]

V.Bolinder T-3 ([illegible]) [illegible]
BC33 Goajiro BC33

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[851
905]

By the dunes. Held by father and sister, these were the only [illegible] we ever saw. The Goajiro [illegible] [illegible] live

Right: *Indian girls*

342
513
352. *A simple Indian hut*

[Facing p. 32]

902
142
291
516
[372]

Our men making fire

Indian salt workers, men and women, at Manaure

[258
412]

[facing p. 33]

070

View of the Goajiro town at Maracaibo

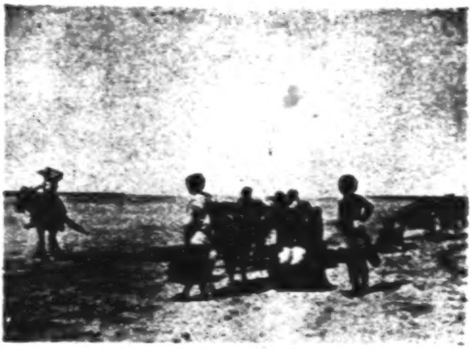
[Facing p.40]

CHAPTER 4

Towards a Mirage

OUR donkey caravan tripped along between the sand 821
dunes at a gentle trot. The sun poured what the
Indians call its molten gold over us in fierce waves. The
donkeys were slow, but our riding-mules were fresh and
even tried a trick or two, throwing our photographer, who
was no expert, into a cactus bush. That was a pity, for the 522
spikes were as long as knitting needles and unpleasantly
hard and sharp. The Indians laughed heartlessly. It was
perhaps the only amusing thing that happened to them on
the whole trip.

We had no idea what our men were called. As I have 551
already mentioned, the Indians' first names are secret. They
always say: 'I have no name' or 'Call me what you like'.
Your name is part of your personality. You cannot surrender
it to strangers. If you know another's name, you can
acquire a certain hold over him, just as you can harm him, [754]
if you had some of his hairs or nail-clippings with which to
work magic. The family name, that of the clan, is naturally
public. White people usually give Spanish names to the
Indians with whom they have to deal, and there are plenty
of Juans and Josés in the peninsula now. Usually, however,
you give a nickname to the Indians you have temporarily
in your service, just as they give their employers nicknames.
We discovered that they had christened our photographer [123]
'The Red One'. He was not red-headed at all, but very fair,
and because of that, his face was always highly coloured in
the heat. I could not get out of them what they called my
wife and me. I suppose they thought that we would be
offended or regard it as insubordination. They had been



291 *Our caravan makes a temporary halt*
492

291 *Resting in the sparse shade of*
516 *a divi-divi tree. My wife is*
137 *stirring the pot. I am on the*
extreme right

312 *A casimba, or water-hole, dug by the Indians*

[Facing p. 48]

551 told that among my own people I was a sort of medicine-man and chief combined.

Nowadays most of the Indians in Guajira acquire three first names: a Spanish one that the white men give them, a nickname, and their true, Indian name, which is secret except to members of their immediate family. When a girl is born, her father names her after her mother or some near female relative, but for everyday use she has a pet name [553] which is only dropped when she reaches marriageable age. She then acquires a new name, which she keeps for the rest of her life.

563 101 The Creoles called those in the border areas who were not Indians '*gente*', or just 'people'. They could scarcely be called white, for many were as good as pure black, being the descendants of former slaves. When they told us in Rio Hacha that there were not any 'people' living in this or that village, they meant that there were none but Indians there. Those who were not Indians, that is those who wore trousers, also called themselves '*civilisados*', while the Indians called them arijuna.

115 124 We called our two old Indians Gaffer and Gammer, and the youngest 'The Lad'. We liked The Lad especially. He was strong, merry and did the work of two. The fourth, who, strangely enough, had a crew cut and was supposed to be our interpreter, we called 'Bristles', and he learned to answer to that. He knew a little Spanish, but as an interpreter he was no use. When the Gaffer had been talking to us for a long time and we asked Bristles what he had said, the answer always was: 'Nothing'. Perhaps that was what the other's talk amounted to, but we should have preferred to have judged that for ourselves. We noticed, too, that if we had to scold the Gaffer, Bristles did not dare repeat what we said. With gestures and the few Guajiro words we knew we could make Gaffer realize that we were annoyed with him, but not always why.

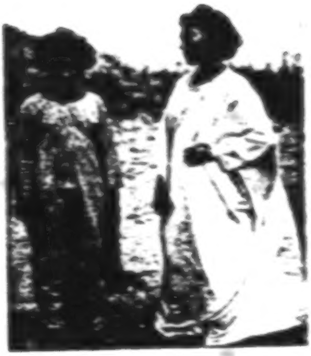
291 386 The men wore nothing but the usual piece of cloth and belt, the *núrcte*, or, in Spanish, guayuco, which really means crupper, and sandals to protect their feet from the cactus spikes lying on the ground, but the Gammer was enveloped

123
142
291
276
372

Left: *I help an old man, who had never seen matches, to light his cigar*

142
291

Chinca, a girl of simple family, (on the left) and a well-born maiden expensively perfumed in a white tunic



[516]

Indian camp and a mestizo

[Facing p. 49]

[386]

in a wide woman's tunic, dyed black with divi-divi. Her 291
face was painted black, too. At her age that could scarcely [302]
have been necessary to save her complexion, but such painting
is also a protection against dangerous spirits. The Gaffer [751]
carried his ceremonial dress with him, tucked away somewhere.
This consisted of an oblong piece of cloth sewn [292]
up along one side and with a hole for the head at the top.
It is worn draped in such a way that the chest is bare.

Thus our caravan made its way along. The animals' 133
shadows contracted further and further. Soon the sun would be right overhead. The very air seemed to have melted in the heat, and the blue hills in the distance had begun to dissolve. Here and there grew a cactus, otherwise there was nothing but sand and salt to be seen. Slowly the caravan crept along. We spurred our mules and rode on ahead, but after a while we had to turn back in order not to go astray. We found the Gaffer riding and the Gammer walking. The Gaffer could hardly stick on. He swayed in the saddle, for he was as drunk as a lord, having smuggled with him a calabash containing spirits instead of water.

He was just about to take another pull as we came galloping up, and he was so frightened that he dropped the calabash, which smashed and the spirits ran out. At that we searched the old couple's baggage, despite their protests, and found another calabash of spirits. We gave the Gaffer a large coin for it. The two young ones were delighted at his misfortune, for his baggage had given them a lot of trouble. It was obvious that the Gaffer had started drinking early, for the loads on the donkeys in his charge were badly secured and danced about, so that one after the other had to be lashed on afresh.

We told the Gammer that she must restrain her old man, an order which the interpreter undoubtedly passed on, probably with some comments of his own. The Gammer was not popular with the two young ones, and Bristles would not lack the courage to tell a woman a few home truths. Gradually the Gafler sobered up, and a good thing he did, for we were approaching an Indian rancho, where he would have to act as spokesman for me.

576 You always rein in before a rancho and wait for those
inside to call to you. If no one comes, it is best to continue
on your way, for either you are not welcome or your prospective
574 host is not at home. We halted outside this rancho
and after a short wait a friendly voice called '*anshi pia*' 'You
262 have come?' and we answered '*aa*', yes. We were then
invited to halt and entertained with sour goat's milk and
boiled goat's meat. In exchange we gave them a little maize,
which is an expensive article there and not easily come by.
Vegetables and fruit are even greater rarities. Naturally
262 they eat the fruit of the fig-cactus during its season. It has a
faint smell, but is refreshing. There is also a tree with fruit
like olives, and which the whites call olives, and the Indians
eat them, but they are said to be poisonous, at least in large
quantities. This tree has the great advantage that, to all
intents and purposes, it never withers. At that time we were
not yet tired of goat's meat and could eat the fare they
offered us. It is the staple food of Guajira, however, and in
the end we got more than enough of it. Even at this place
we thought that everything tasted or smelled of goat, not
only the meat and milk, but the water, the huts and the surroundings as well.

We went with our animals when they were to be watered,
312 to see that they got enough. Many Indians and quite a
number of cattle had gathered round the casimba, for it
was to one of those we went. They had dug deep into the
river bed, making a funnel-shaped hole several score feet
in circumference and, as far as we could see, some thirty
feet deep. During the rains this casimba overflowed and
normally it was half full, they told us, but now there was
only a little running in at the bottom.

The sand was firm enough there for them to have cut
[482] steps, and the Indians were climbing up and down the
whole time with large jars which they emptied into troughs
made of long, hollowed divi-divi trunks, from which the
animals drank greedily.

[415] The women fetched their water there in calabashes or
312 earthenware vessels. An Indian who spoke a little Spanish
731 told us how desperate their plight had been a few years

before, when the casimba had dried up and the cattle had 312 731
roamed round the troughs bellowing till they collapsed and died. The horses, on the other hand, had given up the ghost without complaint.

The water was already turgid; before long it would be as 312
thick as gruel. The water we had been given by the bishop was now finished, and we had to boil the water from the casimba, which had a beastly taste and did not quench our thirst because of the salt in it. The best water is that near the coast.

The cattle and horses were thin, but the men at the well 132
looked strong and well-nourished, as did the women. But 312
how would they look by the time October came with its 231
rain? It was then only July. And suppose no rain came? Or only a few showers? That had happened before. The threat of it always hung over the Indians. If the rain god [776]
Juvap turned his face from them, they were lost. There were still patches of grass here and there, but it was dry and scorched. If need be the cattle could make do with cactus, despite the long spikes that could pierce a stout leather shoe with ease. Very, very carefully the cow lets one of the oval leaves slide into her mouth, almost sucking it in, so that the spikes are bent backwards; she then starts chewing as hard as she can. Often cows have more cactus stuck in their hides than they get inside them. Horses and mules, on the other hand, apparently do not like cactus and will not do more than nibble at it. It is too slow a business to eat it. The goats seemed able to find something to eat everywhere, and are themselves eaten sooner or later. Cattle are not often slaughtered, but goat is the daily fare. Live goats are also taken as provisions on journeys, being easily led on a rope.

We had halted only in order to let the animals drink and 000
for the Indians to fill their water containers. The Gaffer needed a lot of water now—his thirst was unbounded—but the calabashes were in his wife's charge and she only allowed him an occasional gulp. Also he was having to walk, for she was tired and had mounted the donkey again. The Lad tried to enliven the company by imitating the donkeys when they

000 lost their loads and the mule throwing the photographer, but we were all tired and not easily amused.

609 I did not want to stay at that rancho. Their reception had been friendly, but they had something against the Gaffer. I thought they had hesitated to receive him, and caution suggested that we ought to camp by ourselves, as long as [132] we had people on whom we could not rely. Evening came and with it a slight, cooling breeze. Travelling was pleasant then without the heat of the sun. Knowing that the moon would rise early, we decided to go on as long as we could.

At midnight we halted in bright moonlight, lit a fire and made coffee. A couple of Indians came uninvited and squatted nearby. The coastal Indians had become infected with the vices of civilization and stole like jackdaws. We had already lost a number of small things at Arema and the other places on the coast, and had no wish to lose more. In Guajira you must take the law into your own hands.

We produced our firearms and set about cleaning them. We each had a rifle and a pistol, and also I had a number of pistols that I had bought cheap at auctions after the war and intended to use as objects of barter. We put up our camp beds under the open sky, laid our weapons beside them and told our Indians to 'sleep with one eye open', a phrase they themselves used. We assured them that we should do the same, and that our open eyes would be fixed on our baggage.

We knew that the Indians would be constantly starting up and looking round. No sound escaped their trained ears. We were not suspicious of their being in a conspiracy with the other Indians; in fact, they were quite frightened.

When we woke at daybreak, all was well. We packed up [411] and set off again at once. Now and again we met naked Indians armed with bows and arrows. We gave tobacco to [576] them all, as custom dictates. It is almost a sort of tax which [431] white people have to pay in order to be able to travel in peace in Guajira. If you happen to be smoking one of the country's thin cigars and meet an Indian, you can, if you are in a hurry, take the cigar from your mouth and stick it into his, mutter a greeting, receive an answer, and ride on.

000 Although I had a compass and a map, such as it was,

neither was much help. Our route went in a zig-zag from 080
water hole to water hole. I did not feel altogether sure that
the Gaffer would find the mission station. From what I
could understand of the interpreter's inadequate Spanish
and floods of Guajiro, it seemed that when the old man
made his trip to the Macuira Hills, there was not yet a
mission station there. I knew that it was of relatively recent
date. If we could only get to Macuira, we could ask our way
to the monks, I felt sure of that. Otherwise we should have
to try and find our way to the little harbour of Puerto
Estrella on the east coast of the peninsula. To go there
involved a detour, but there would certainly be a white
person or at least a mestizo there, who would be able to
show us the way to Amúruru.

It seemed to us that our baquiano not only wandered
round in search of water holes, but also avoided certain
ranchos. What, we wondered, was the position with his
clan? Was it engaged in a feud just then? I knew little of
clan quarrels and blood-feuds, then.

The Gaffer now began asking everyone we met the way to 484
Macuira. It was obvious that he did not know where he 151
was and that we had a bad guide. The Guajiro have a
wonderful sense of direction. They find their way unerringly 823
about their trackless cactus steppes, where every place
looks alike. They know every depression in the ground,
every eminence, and they all have names. Like the Arabs
in the desert, they never forget a way they have once
travelled, so it was obvious that the Gaffer had never before
been where we were then, that he had simply gone astray.
The Indians' ability to follow tracks is also amazing. [224]
They can see by the hoof prints when a strange horse has
been in among a herd, and they can track down a strayed
bullock, even if it has joined company with others. An
Indian can see whether others belong to his clan or not from
a long distance off, even when he does not know them
personally. They have a clan mark tattooed, or sometimes [302
painted on their thighs, it is true, but an Indian seems to [304]
know to which clan they belong, even when you cannot 614]
distinguish those marks through field glasses.

180 Our provisions were at an end. We had been too generous and not rationed them strictly, the men having complained of hunger the whole time. Now we were suffering for it.

136 Away in the distance, well out of range, we saw a *venado*, a deer, making off through the cactus with graceful bounds. Where did the deer drink? Surely they would not dare approach the Indians' water-holes, which were either guarded or covered.

'Deer do not drink,' said the Indians. 'They are content with the dew they can lick out of the cactus flowers.'

608 We were thus without both food and water. We whites had tinned food, but the Indians only appreciated the empty tins. The Lad then offered to get us some food and water. He had not been away more than an hour, when he returned with a young girl carrying a live kid in her arms. She wore [291] nothing but the remnants of a woman's loin cloth, and apparently knew that white people did not approve of nakedness, for she tried to hide her charms behind the kid. [439] We therefore gave her a piece of white cloth in payment, although it was really a pity to let her cover herself, for she was the shapeliest Indian girl we had yet seen in the peninsula. The cloth would protect her from the sun and make her fair-skinned and beautiful, so she was overjoyed and offered to show us the way to what she said was a much better water hole.

312 This new water hole was shaded by some divi-divi trees—the trees were withered and their shade sparse—and surrounded by reddish hillocks. It was not very deep and a [515 couple of women were bathing in it. They paid no attention 834] to us, nakedness in the bath being considered decent. Our Indians and animals were able to drink as much as they liked there, and we also filled our water-containers. Then we moved on looking for a suitable place in which to eat our goat in peace.

590 Gladtvet, our photographer, put up the tent to give us a little shade, and meanwhile the Indians slaughtered the kid and cut it up. My wife cooked the pieces we had taken for ourselves, helped by the little girl who had come with us. She was now wearing the piece of cloth like a pinafore and

hopnig for a taste of the kid. The Indians always share what they have. 600 609

When nothing remained of the kid but some well-gnawed bones, a wrinkled old man with a straggling beard approached. He looked famished and we gave him a couple of hooves, which he split and sucked at, while our men cracked the bones for themselves. The newcomer had to have tobacco too, so I gave him a cigar and a box of matches. He turned the matches this way and that in amazement, obviously never having seen such a thing before. He handed it back to me and I showed him how to strike a match, at which he gave a great jump. I had to light my own cigar before he dared let me put the match to his.

Then a group of Indians on horseback came galloping up. Just as they reached us a gust of wind bowled the tent over and a flying tent peg struck my wife on the mouth making it bleed. The newcomers were all young, unarmed men. They dismounted, flocked round my wife, examined her mouth rather roughly, but with the best intentions, bewailing the accident. They then tore Gladtvet's hat off his head and handed it to my wife as suitable compensation for the damage, appearing to be delighted with their judgment. I distributed tobacco and they and the thin old man gobbled up the water in which the kid had been cooked and which our Indians had somehow left in the pot. The young men then rode off, laughing gaily.

Our men did not seem to approve of their visit. They wanted us to move on again at once, as if they thought the young men were spies, so our little caravan moved off, leaving the wrinkled old man sitting there, smiling a wan old man's smile.

We travelled on across hillocks covered with dry scrub. 133
The ground was strewn with bleached bones. Then we came to sparse divi-divi woods, and towards evening we saw ahead of us a wide savanna covered with sparse short [233]
grass, on which thin cows, bony horses and woolly sheep were grazing, and in the background rose the shadowy silhouette of hills. These, we felt, must be the Macuira Hills; and the Indians we met confirmed that they were.

133 We had gone round Sierra Chimare to the north. Understandably enough, since it was the monks' name, nobody seemed to have heard of Nazaret, but they did not react to Amúruru either.

Macuira is quite a large complex of hills, and if the Indians were going to be unable to help us, it might prove quite difficult to find the mission station. Suddenly a man came up on a horse. He was wearing trousers. He was so
080 astonished to see us that he nearly tumbled off and his horse became restive. We told him who we were and where we were going, and his face lit up.

'Let us camp together,' he suggested. 'I have a camp under a tree that is large enough for you as well. I have a herd of goats that I am driving home.'

We went with the man, who was a mestizo—and had two Indian wives, who helped my wife make goat stew.

In Guajira you can sleep in the open perfectly well during
[513] most of the year, but it is more pleasant to lie under a tree. The mestizo was able to tell us exactly how to get to Nazaret.

137 We broke camp at daybreak, before the sun had begun to send its shafts through the sparse leaves of the tree. We three whites started off at a good pace, and soon the mestizo with his goats and our own pack animals had dropped behind. Before long we came in among hillocks sparsely clad with divi-divi and other bushes and trees that did not mind drought. This sort of vegetation the Indians call a wood. The hours passed; the sun was unmercifully hot, as it always was. Our tongues were stuck to our gums by thirst, and a persistent breeze filled our ears with sand. We did not mind, however, for paradise was not far away.

133 The trees were all withered and leafless. Then we came to valleys filled with white sand, that in places formed terraces. The mules' hooves sank in deep. I realized why we came across sand so far from the sea: all that part of the hills had sunk into the sea during the quarternary period, and had then risen again carrying the sand with it.

Then a hill like a sugar-loaf emerged. That was Ituhor,
[103] about which we had been told, and we knew that we were

not far from the mission station. Ituhor means 'roast corn' 133 and it does look like a dark golden brown giant corn-cob. [103] Suddenly we were in a valley that was all green. We had to rub our eyes. Not only grass grew there, but tall trees with [137] fresh green leaves. The crests of coconut palms waved high above them. We saw bananas, maize, and all sorts of fruit trees. What a miracle! The cause of it was a little stream that had water in it almost all the year round, though it petered out in sand on its way to the sea. We enjoyed the greenery, the smells and the bird song, and watched the multi-coloured butterflies. The valley was not inhabited; it was a field. After that we came to more white sand, where everything was just as arid as before . 797

Nazaret lay in the middle of this sea of sand. Ahead of us we saw some whitewashed buildings with grass roofs and one larger building with a turret. A monk came walking briskly to greet us, his white beard waving in the breeze. This was Father Salvador, whom we knew from a trip we had made farther south five years before. He had then been stationed at the foot of the Andes and his flowing beard had been brown. How old he had grown! The desert seemed to have aged him by twenty years at least, we thought. Then the other monks emerged and friendly nuns took charge of my wife.

We had good, sweet water, decent food and black coffee. The kindly fathers at once set about preparing a whitewashed hut for us. They wanted us to stay for some time, make Nazaret our headquarters, from which we could go to the Indian camps in the surrounding country, which we would thus get to know. They would also find us good guides.

Then our Indians arrived with our baggage. We paid 609 them and dismissed them. 673 We could not help laughing when Gaffer insisted that he could be of great use to us as a guide, for he had neither been there before, nor even been able to find his way there. His old wife had taken advantage of our absence to appropriate a number of our things, including an aluminium saucepan. This came to light because her pack looked suspiciously bulky and had to be searched, to her

609 673 great indignation. In those parts to which civilization had penetrated, it was not considered shameful to steal, provided you were not discovered.

Why do all semi-civilized natives, whether Indians or negroes, steal like jackdaws, while primitive peoples in the jungle respect each other's property? Stealing had become a sport with the half-bred Guajiros, but the Indian law was still enforced: he who was discovered had to replace what he had stolen and pay compensation as well.

The old man took advantage of the confusion to make off. When we had finished with his wife, he and his donkeys had gone, and his spouse had to follow on foot, swearing and cursing as hard as she could.

115 124 The two younger Indians did not go with the old couple. They received half a bag of maize and were delighted. It should have lasted them the whole way back and more, but I am sure that they cooked it all, as soon as they could borrow a pot, eating more than they had ever done before and treating everyone else, and probably going hungry for the rest of the way home.

We had wanted to give The Lad a hat, a thing for which he longed, as he had spent the last few days trying to explain to my wife, for whom he had a great admiration and for whose help he was hoping. He had been sure that there would be hats to be had at Nazaret. But of Nazaret both he and we had had exaggerated ideas. It was a mission station, not a trading post. The monks did not sell hats, and they possessed but one apiece. The Lad had earned a hat and would have had one, had it been possible; but he had to walk away as bare of head as he came.

CHAPTER 5

Slaves and Slave-dealers

We had expected lush green valleys and thus the mission 133
station lying on its terrace of sand was to some extent a disappointment. There was greenery in the area, as we knew from having passed it on the way, but it was quite far off and one had to wade laboriously through deep sand to reach it.

Those green valleys could be called oases. Nazaret, per- 797
haps, was the one relatively peaceful place on the whole peninsula. The Indians respected the monks, who were kindly, understanding, civilized people. Nazaret was a fixed point and the only place where we could set up a headquarters from which to make excursions of varying length; otherwise we would have to travel and keep travelling all the time we were in Guajira. There were supplies of food there and drinking water. They had a rainwater cistern and also a casimba with clear water that never seemed to run dry. It had cost them a lot of labour and effort to erect the buildings there. All the materials had been brought by pack-donkey from Puerto Estrella, to which it was taken in schooners. Maize, sugar and other such provisions still had to be fetched the same way. They were not always able to get meat from the Indians. Once it was nearly three months before they could replenish their larder. They had great difficulty in protecting things from ants, which were as numerous there as everywhere in tropical South America, to say nothing of other noxious creatures.

The monks and nuns together looked after two hundred 797
Indian children, and their support was not to be hazarded. 736
The Capuchins always concentrate on the children, whom

797 736 they take into boarding schools, so-called *orfelinatos*. It was not difficult to get children for these schools there. Many poor families voluntarily hand their children over in hard times, when they cannot support them themselves. Others sell them for a quantity of maise. If the mission did [567] not buy them, some well-to-do chief would, and they would become slaves. The monks did not always know whether a child offered them was stolen or not.

Well-to-do Indians also liked to send their children to Nazaret to learn Spanish and other useful things. These, however, often became more Indian than the Indians once they left the school. We met a few who refused to remember their Spanish and who appeared to be quite uninfluenced by the monks. This evident reaction against civilization was due, perhaps, to the strictly ordered life of the school.

The poor children had to stay there always. Some of them worked in a cotton plantation which the monks had started in order to help the mission's finances. There were already one or two married couples. They were not considered proper Indians, because the men wore trousers.

584 797 A Guajiro girl is normally not allowed to choose her husband. Her family does that. Thus, if the monks and nuns decided which pupil was to marry which, it amounted to the same thing. The monks, of course, did not get a bride-price, nor did the bridegroom often receive his morning-gift that traditionally consists of ornaments and clothing.

797 Why had they built the mission station just at that spot, where it was so difficult to maintain it? The choice had been dictated mainly by the monks' desire to try and save children and others from being sold as slaves. Also there was water and it was near a harbour.

567 Do people really traffic in slaves in our day? Yes, slavery still exists. In Guajira, the traffic increases whenever there is a drought and times are bad. It has always gone through Castilletes on the south coast, which lies just where the frontier between Colombia and Venezuela reaches the sea. The slaves are sold to Venezuela, which is also more accessible for that part of the peninsula.

One day we met three slave-workers. They were sitting 567 on a hillside gnawing at roast goat's feet. Talking with them we discovered that they had to serve their master without wages. Must they do so all their lives? we asked. Perhaps not, but they were bound to work for him till certain debts and obligations had been paid off, and these seemed very complicated and vague.

The real slaves for life are the prisoners taken in war. [727] Thus there are various forms of slavery in Guajira. It is, of course, an ancient phenomenon, of which the whites would seem to have taken advantage rather than to have combatted.

Slavery is a form of punishment. Formerly it was only conquered people and prisoners of war who were kept as slaves. This was usual among several Indian peoples, especially the Aruaks, to which group the Guajiro belong. [197] With them slavery has been systematized.

Let us see how it is that someone becomes a slave. If an 626 Indian has been insulted or killed, his clan demands compensation. 567 If this is not paid, war breaks out between the two clans and those taken prisoner are treated as slaves without further ado. The Indians, however, never begin a war for the purpose of obtaining slaves. The slaves are reckoned as part of the damages, and they and the possessions of the conquered are divided among the victors according to certain principles. The eldest maternal uncle, mother, nephew, brothers and the leader of the fighting are entitled to damages; and if there is enough, the leader of the warriors will usually distribute some of the booty to his nearest relatives, mother, sisters, and maternal aunts. All the property of the enslaved prisoners-of-war passes into the hands of the victors: their pastures, water-holes, cattle, utensils, clothing, ornaments.

Slaves are the property of their masters, who can do 567 with them as they see fit; sell them, give them away, kill them or use their labour and, if they are women, have intercourse with them as they may desire. The same goes for the men, if their master is a homosexual, as is not unusual in [838] Guajira. The owner's unmarried sons or nephews also con-

567 sider themselves entitled to the female slaves. The owner,
however, is bound to give a slave enough food from his
own kitchen or to provide maize or other raw ingredients
for him or her to cook. He must also provide a male slave
[435] with a wife, either giving him a female slave or buying a girl
for him from some poor clan for ten goats. The state of
[428] slavery is hereditary; thus the children of slaves belong to
the owner of their parents. If the owner of a male slave
should buy a poor free girl to make him a wife, her children
[611] will be free, since relationship is reckoned on the female
side. If a free man pays a bride-price for a slave, she becomes
free; but if he merely buys her for a house-slave she remains
a slave. Male slaves are set to work in the fields or with the
herds. Female slaves perform domestic occupations. Some-
times a female slave becomes nurse to the owner's children.
[571 The laws of Guajira hospitality require that the master of a
837] house place a female slave at his guests' disposal for the
night.

The Indians, of course, have the right to punish their slaves, but the chastisement is seldom excessive. Slaves are treated as superior domestic animals, or perhaps I ought to say, as we treat domestic animals, for the Creoles, the Indians' neighbours, are not animal-lovers. Naturally there are cruel Indians too. The monks once came across a poor little slave girl out in the wilds. Her hands were so badly burned that she could not use them. She had been trying to keep herself alive by gnawing at cactus with her mouth. They took her back with them. It transpired that her mistress had lost her temper with her, thrust her hands into the fire and then driven her away.

The Indians make a distinction between slaves taken in war, who are their master's property, and dependent workers. These latter have to do what their master tells them, but he does not dispose of their persons. I called them slave-workers. They can be sold, but in theory it is only their labour that is transferred.

735 In times of distress the poor not infrequently have to get
567 rid of members of the family who are unable to contribute
to their own support, and this they do by selling them. This

applies mainly to children. These then become slave- 735
workers and by right should be liberated once they have 567
paid off with their work the sum for which they were
bought, but that may not always be done. It is the mother,
the uncle or the aunts who decide when a child is to be
sold. This seems cruel to us now, yet it is not so long ago
that children in the country were auctioned as workers in
Sweden and elsewhere.

The owner of these slave-workers is bound to provide
them with food and clothing as he must his slaves; thus
children sold into slavery at least do not starve to death as
they well might at home. 614

An Indian who has been unable to pay his debts must in 567
certain circumstances go and serve his creditor. That is 686
reminiscent of our own ancient slavery for debt. The
obligation to work for another can also be a punishment [685]
laid upon a thief or a robber. As long as the slave-worker's
clan is able to take action against the master if he goes
beyond his entitlement, the position of the slave-worker is
different from that of the slave; but if his clan is weak and
unable to help him, he can be utterly in his master's power.
At times a whole clan may become so weak that it has to
seek the support of a stronger clan, and thereby becomes
bound to work for the latter and is entirely dependent
upon it.

While the master of a female slave may use her as he will, 567
he has no right to have intercourse with a female slave- 833
worker. Nor can he prevent others from entering into 614
relations with her. If her clan has any voice in affairs, it will
require damages of anyone who seduces her; but if her clan
is powerless, then the female slave-worker is without sup-
port either of her clan or her master, and not infrequently [548]
ends as a prostitute. Prostitution is contrary to Indian law,
but nowadays it does exist.

Even if a girl's clan is insignificant it will always demand damages, if someone has had relations with the girl and made her pregnant. Usually the man will pay up, that being the decent thing to do. Perhaps he wishes to marry the girl; in that case he must first pay her master the debt

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Above left: *Youth playing a flute*

Above right: *Little girl with beads*

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Right: *Riders*

[facing p. 64]

567 614 which occasioned her becoming a slave-worker, and then
833 pay a bride-price to her family. The girl becomes free and,
of course, her child is born free.

567 Real slaves are those taken in war. Nowadays they
seldom take men or boys prisoner, but prefer to kill them
instead. Otherwise there is always a risk that eventually
they will try to avenge themselves. Women and girls are
628 mostly spared and made slaves. Civil strife is common, and
648 the Macuira Hills were no more peaceful than other areas,
but the Indians were reluctant to harm the monks, though
on occasion even they became involved.

One day a violent feud broke out between two clans. The chief of one clan himself led the fighting and had determined that the enemy was to be utterly exterminated. The battle raged quite close to the mission. To be anywhere near the Indians when they are fighting is dangerous, for those with rifles are seldom able to shoot and stray bullets fly everywhere. Poisoned arrows are also in the air, but they are better aimed and do not travel so far.

628 One day the monks heard that this chief had captured a
727 couple of boys of the enemy clan and had ordered that they
797 should be burned alive. The boys were reported to have
been tied to a tree, round which a large fire had been lit,
649 after which the chief's men had gone away, leaving the boys
to their fate. Two of the monks set off at once for the tree. As they hurried along rain began to fall and they hoped that that might put the fire out and so save the boys' lives. When they arrived, however, one of the boys was already dead, having been suffocated by the smoke. The other was still alive and the monks carried him back with them, though they scarcely expected him to survive, for he was very badly burned. It seems pointless and cruel to kill little boys, but the Indians were afraid that, if they spared them, they would take vengeance later; thus, when they heard what had happened, they sent a message saying that the monks must hand the boy over.

The monks replied that the boy was dead. That was the only way of saving his life—if it could be saved. He died during the night, however, and was buried in the mission's

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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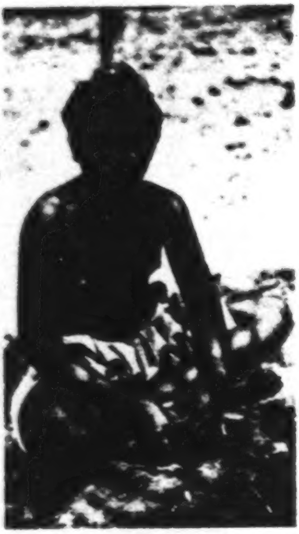
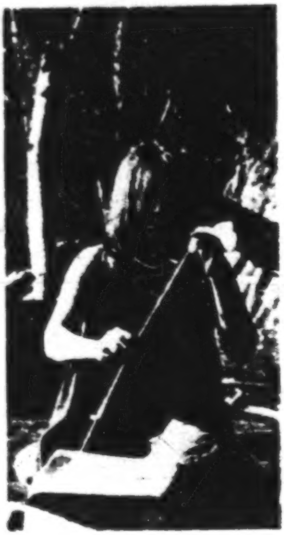


Majayura, the virgin confined in order to be prepared for marriage. Contrary to the rules, she was allowed out for a moment to be photographed



Old woman spinning

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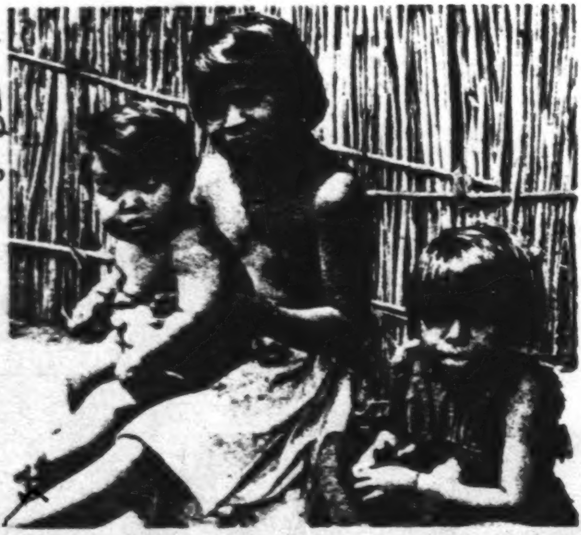

Children are not undernourished in Macuira

[facing p. 65]

garden. In the morning the Indians came and demanded the 628
body. The monks refused, not wishing to lend themselves 727
to violation of the dead, and said that they would only 797
treat with the chief. He, however, was not in the vicinity. 648
The Indians threatened to burn the mission station. Fortunately the chief arrived at this juncture, and told his braves that they must not use violence against the monks.

'Never to kill and just to rescue those condemned to death as you do, does not fit in with our laws,' he said to the monks. 'You Capuchins lack any sense of reality. But I shall do you no harm, since you never harm others.'

It sometimes happens that the victor instead of killing 567
his male prisoners will sell them as slaves to the white
men, preferably to places at some distance from the penin- 439
sula, such as the Dutch islands of Aruba and Curaçao, Zulia in Venezuela, or the Magdalena department of Colombia. The Indians deal in slaves among themselves; they also sell them to the white men and these, too, traffic in them among themselves.

Legally, a slave sold to a white person should become free, but in reality the owner of the *hacienda* treats him as a serf, branding his own mark on him, depriving him of his clan name and giving him his own. To sell a prisoner into slavery is not always to hear the last of him; for some have escaped from the Dutch islands, stowing away on boats, and on their return have exacted vengeance. It is not easy for hacienda slaves to escape. They are often hunted like animals.

There was a considerable sale of young girls to the whites, 548
a scandalous traffic. In Indian territory this was mainly in 567
the hands of quasi-chiefs, generally mestizos and other halfbreeds with no right to the title, who cleverly saw how to exploit the Guajiro laws to earn a lot of money. The Guajiro customary law was never intended to apply to export.

The monks were the chief opponents of the slave-traffic. 567
They received a special grant from the government of 648
Colombia to enable them to purchase the freedom of slave children. The white men made no distinction between slave

567 and slave-worker, whichever they bought, they treated alike. In times of famine, so-called recruiting-agents, usually 648 half-breeds, appeared on the scene and bought up workers for the haciendas. Even those Creoles who were not directly engaged in this shameful traffic considered slavery a phenomenon about which there was nothing to be done. After all it was an ancient institution. Slave-workers with Creoles never became free, unless they could manage to escape, for the Creoles did not respect the Guajiro law according to which a slave-worker's servitude ceases when he has paid his debt. Those white people, mestizos or mulattos who had bought slave-workers saw to it that they never got away once they had put their clan mark to a contract, the purport of which they did not understand.

The central chain of hills, Sierra de Jarará, and Maicao in 567 the western low country, were usually accounted the centre 797 of this slave traffic. If a poor man stole a bullock or a goat to feed himself and his family, he was often punished by being sold as a slave-worker—having nothing with which to pay the owner compensation.

The monks are needed there all right. They calculated that during the five years they had been working there, some [563] three thousand slaves had been sold. In the old days the Guajiro also had negro slaves, as is apparent from Antonio Julian's description of the country written at the end of the eighteenth century. According to him, the Indians used to [439] obtain firearms, spirits, wine and slaves in Rio Hacha, in exchange for their pearls. The pearl fishery was entirely in the Indians' hands. Elsewhere, negro slaves were bartered for pearls from boats lying off the coast. Antonio Julian expressed concern at the fact that with the addition of negroes and negresses not only would the Indians increase in numbers, but also that they would acquire an additional population of mulattos, mestizos and zambos, who would make common cause with them and make them 'even more terrible, insolent and difficult to conquer'.

When he visited the peninsula he was met by a chief who was attended by two negro slaves, splendidly got up, like lackeys, and that obviously impressed him greatly.

The eldest monk at the station, Father Crispin, had a lot 567
to tell us of the slave trade and of his travels on the peninsula. 797

The monks and nuns live in a state of constant nervous tension. That saps their strength, as does the constant anxiety about supplies, the heat and the monotonous diet: goat's meat, maize and dried fish.

'You age quickly here,' said Father Salvador, who was himself proof of that.

We attended mass in the primitive little church there. 797
Father Salvador preached with true Spanish eloquence. He was said to have been an officer in a crack regiment, and sometimes when he gave orders to the Indian boys, you could see that that was so. There, in the dark little mud church, he preached a sermon that only a few understood, but a crowd of Indian children knelt and listened and some half-naked grown-ups watched inquisitively from the door, as did three heretics from the distant north.

CHAPTER 6

Indiscreet Investigation

123 THAT heading really describes our activities during the next few weeks, while we travelled round among the Indians of Macuira, visiting them in their ranchos and questioning them about all sorts of things. The Indians were not at all self-conscious and gladly and frankly told us all [648] we wished to know. They had not been bullied by white people, as so many other Indians have, and we took care not to make fun of their customs. Because of that, they had no inhibitions. The monks assured us that on the whole we should be able to make the acquaintance of the Indians in more peaceful conditions in the Macuira Hills than elsewhere in the peninsula. They had put it about that we belonged to quite a different clan from the Creoles, which our appearance seemed to confirm, and they thought that it would never occur to the Indians to avenge themselves on us, if one of them had been insulted by a white person somewhere else. Of course, we ought to be careful, they added, and promised to give us a reliable servant. The snug little whitewashed hut in which we lived was to be at our disposal as long as we remained in Macuira. From it we could go off for trips of a few days, as it suited us, and so get to know the whole area.

115 We got our servant, an unusually nice Guajiro called Francisco who had often travelled with Father Crispin. Francisco was peace-loving, but not at all afraid of his fellow Indians. That was a great advantage. In dealing with primitive peoples you must always keep calm, especially when they appear aggressive.

Francisco's blood was slightly mixed, but, of course, he 115
followed his Indian mother's clan and bore the name [614]
Ipuana. This clan's symbol is the hawk. Francisco was married and his wife belonged to the Dog clan, Jayariyú Their children were thus called Jayariyú, and Francisco was not even of the same family, though no one doubted his paternity.

Francisco served us well on our journeys. He was not especially quick-witted, but he was certainly not a simpleton. He suited us well in Guajira, for he knew both the country and the people; later, when we came to parts that he did not know, he was a little out of his depth.

Francisco's wife, Anita—the nuns had called her that— 115
used to help my wife in our hut, and glad we were to have 685
her, for primitive housekeeping involves much hard labour. Anita had a sweet young sister, who had not yet acquired a christian name. She was called Chinca. She had no real business in our hut, but she used to come sometimes and lounge in the doorway, looking rather fetching. We noticed, however, that after each of Chinca's visits something was missing. These were not valuable things, it is true, for we did not leave those lying about, but match boxes used to disappear and occasional packets of oatmeal. Although we still had plenty of the latter and Chinca was good to look at and welcome to stand in our doorway—we thought we would teach her not to steal. We filled an empty oatmeal packet with hay and sand and laid it conveniently within reach. Chinca came and went again, and the packet went too. A few minutes later Chinca came rushing back, flung the packet on to the floor and cursed us up hill and down dale in her own expressive tongue. We could not help roaring with laughter; a thief who goes back to those he has robbed and curses them because the stolen goods have not been to his liking! Anita begged our forgiveness on her sister's behalf:

'After all, she is a heathen and does not know better.'

'And you, Anita, do you never steal?'

'Not now. I am Christian. But when I was a heathen, ah! then I stole such a lot.'

115 And her eyes shone at the recollection of the now for-
685 bidden pleasures of her girlhood.

When I went on trips in the surrounding country I
124 usually had Francisco with me and often my wife. Anita
had then to be ready to feed us when we came home,
whether it were the same day, or the next, or three days
later. In such things Indian women have patience. They
know how to wait, and they are never surprised.

We began our exploration of the brown hills and green
124 valleys of Macuira with a long trip on foot. Laboriously
556 we waded through the fine sand. This is almost firm when
it is damp, but it was then the dry season and the sand was
loose. We were going to visit relatives of Francisco, simple
people, but not actually poor. To us who had already had a
certain amount to do with Indians, it was a surprise to find
ourselves dealing in such categories as 'rich', 'poor', 'well-to-do', etc., just as though we were concerned with white
people. Among all other Indians the difference in economic
status between individuals had been relatively insignificant,
as, presumably, it had been among the Guajiro before they
took to herding cattle.

133 The Indians we were to visit lived in a beautiful place,
just on the fringe of a watered valley between purple brown
heights, with the peak of Ituhor dominating the landscape.
The valley was like a green Bengal fire against its parched
342 background. There were two huts, built of cactus wood and
with roofs of the same material. They were saddle-backed
and linked by a wall, which acted as a shield against the
wind, that there always blows in the same direction. In
front of this wall, that is between the two houses, were the
417 fires. Round about were shelves covered with grass and
erected on four poles. The Creoles call these *trojas*. You can
sit under them and be out of the sun, and cooking utensils
and stores can be kept on them out of reach of animals.
352 Here and there were hammocks stretched between poles
stuck in the ground, and there were other poles used in the
all but daily butchering of a goat or sheep. Round these
there were dark patches on the ground.

123 Having Francisco with us we were naturally well re-
352

ceived. They brought out stools carved with animals' heads 123
and tails for us to sit on, and then four young men hastened 352
to entertain us with music. I had happened to ask about 534
musical instruments and it appeared that we had come to a
musical family. They all played the flute, which there was
usually small, of reed or wood, and ornamented with carved
figures. There was also a larger flute which had a mouthpiece
and reed, like a child's trumpet, and a calabash at the other
end. This instrument buzzed and droned like a bumble-bee.
It was extraordinary. It did not seem a South American
instrument at all. In fact, it was quite simply an offshoot
of the eastern snake-charmer's flute, which I had seen in
Morocco. How had it got to America? Perhaps through the [171]
Moors. The early Spanish discoverers had Moorish slaves
and servants with them, and, as we shall see, this flute was
not the only indication of Moorish influence.

Guajira is often called the Arabia of South America, 000
because it too is an arid peninsula with a population largely consisting of nomad herdsmen. In the distance a Guajiro caravan looks thoroughly eastern, and who knows from whom the Guajiros' forefathers acquired their knowledge of how to ride and to rear cattle?

Not wishing to spoil the concert, I said nothing of all this. 123
I myself am quite unmusical, but my wife gave the per- 533
formers full marks. The pieces had names that suited the setting: 'The Little Goat seeks its Mother', 'The Horses are driven Home', 'By the rippling Water'. The four also sang. To European ears their singing was considerably less attractive than the music, but the words were often poetical and lovely. 'The little goat laments and says: the water that I drink is salt and salt are the plants I have to eat. And just as it begins to drizzle, the little goat's salt tears fall along with the other drops upon the salt ground.' In that perhaps was a little too much salt, but it was typically Guajiran. Even a goat can get too much of what others seek so avidly elsewhere.

They showed us other musical instruments: a drum that 123
was played for dancing and a whistle made of calabash, in- 534
tended for signalling. One of the four also produced a

123 musical bow. It was quite small. He held one end between
534 his lips and struck the strings with a stick. If the reed-flute
was introduced by the Moors in those early days, the
musical bow must have come with negro slaves. Stringed
instruments were not known in South America before the
[177] arrival of the white man. The Indians knew nothing of all
that, but neither of these two originally foreign instruments
were used in their rites, which supports the conclusion that
they were introduced late.

The concert was interrupted by the women announcing
123 that a meal awaited us. This began with the oily, somewhat
262 nauseous berries which the Creoles call olives. We did not
264 like their taste and never did more than just sample them.
We had also heard that they might be injurious. The main
dish—one could almost say, naturally—consisted of boiled
dried goat's meat, the standard fare in the peninsula, and
we were given water that also tasted of goat—we preferred
not to know why.

251 In Guajira it is possible to dry meat in the sun without
salting it, providing you cut it in strips and remove all
bone. In moister parts of the Caribbean countries meat has
to be properly salted before it can be preserved by drying,
but in the dry air of Guajira that can be dispensed with.
Salt, too, is a thing of which they have more than enough.

Having four young men present, I thought I would
123 arrange a competition for marksmanship with bow and
526 arrow and with a sling. The prizes were an empty biscuit
tin, a handkerchief and a needle. These were all desirable
things and the contestants did their best. The fourth
received a Swedish ten öre piece as consolation prize.

411 I took the opportunity to take a closer look at their
weapons. The bows were powerful and had round sections;
the arrows had iron heads shaped like a lancet. An old man
said that in the old days the heads used to be made of bamboo.
Some of the arrows, those intended for smaller birds,
had blunt points made of wood or wax. The quarry was
meant to be stunned by the force of the impact. They
showed us arrows equipped with cross-pieces to prevent
them becoming lost when used in the scrub. The cross-

piece made the arrow stick in a bush, instead of piercing through it. Other arrows were really harpoons. The head was fastened to the shaft by a string wound round it; it loosened on impact, and the shaft with its cross-piece stuck in the bush, preventing the wounded animal from escaping. One of the youths shot arrows that whistled when they flew through the air. The sound was made by a small hollow seed-case fixed to the shaft. I asked about poisoned arrows and after some hesitation, they produced one, the only one they had. They would not part with it. 411

Here, at last, was one of the notorious poisoned arrows for which both the Indians themselves and the white men entertained the greatest respect. As usual with South American arrows, this one was made of a light reed shaft, into which was stuck a plug of wood to which the actual head was fastened. This consisted of the tail-barb of a sting-ray. The early conquerors of this part of South America encountered Indians who used arrows with heads made of fish-spines. The point of these arrows is roughly four inches long; it is thin and narrow and has fine barbs. It is stuck into the wooden plug, which is split vertically, and secured with a binding of thread. The Indians showed us how easily it became detached. The barbs made it difficult to pull out, and they said that it often broke off, leaving a piece in the wound. [825]

Sting-rays are not uncommon in the lagoons of the border areas of Guajira, and during the rains they are to be found everywhere. They follow the rivers up from the sea and seem to like shallow water, where they lie treacherously buried in the mud of the bottom. If you tread on one, it gives you a very nasty sting. Are they poisonous? Some people say that they are. Some travel writers of the present day have tried to give their readers that impression, but it is not correct. The wound, however, is painful and difficult to heal. It becomes easily infected, which is due to the membranes adhering to the sting. That is what the well-known toxicologist who made an exhaustive examination of my Guajiro arrows when I returned home stated. He pointed out that the sting-ray is also found in the Mediterranean, 136

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136 411 and that one classic Greek author says that Odysseus himself died as the result of a thrust from a spear which had a ray's sting for a head. If that were the case, the head must have been poisoned, or else there was infection. The sting of the Mediterranean ray is not poisonous in itself. Guajiro arrows, however, are poisoned with a grey-yellow substance 411 adhering to the head. The Indians carefully removed the reed case protecting the head and showed me the poison. I asked what the stuff was made of, but they did not know. That, they said, was the secret of the piaches, the medicine men; and they also said that they did not even know where the arrows came from, nor who prepared the poison. Francisco later assured us that they were telling the truth. Poisoned arrows were rare nowadays, he said, and difficult to come by. I told him to inquire about such arrows everywhere, and that I should gladly pay well for them. This he did, and I had got quite a little collection before I left Guajira. It is now priceless. The manufacture of poisoned arrows seems to have ceased a few years later.

The accounts of the Indians and white people agreed that no effect of the poison was felt until some days later; the wounded person had violent attacks of cramp which quickly caused death. The wound made by the brittle point was not serious in itself and never mortal, which made the effects of it seem all the more mysterious and fateful.

Celedon, a priest who wrote a description of the arrows in the nineteenth century, and several later writers, have said that the poison is prepared by pounding poisonous creatures, snakes, frogs, spiders and ants to a pulp, which is allowed to lie and rot. Eventually the pulp is boiled, and all sorts of precautions are taken, the preparation of poison being generally considered a hazardous undertaking. The details these writers give of all the poisonous animals used would seem to be apocryphal. The Indians like telling fantastic stories about the arrows, and even the early conquerors were regaled with them. However, if a mass consisting of rotting animal remains is thoroughly boiled there cannot be any live bacteria left to cause an infection, and as long as there was an interval before the 'poison' took

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effect, it must have been a case of infection. The idea of animal pulp as poison for arrows dates back to the time of the conquistadores and the same tale has been repeated right up to our own day.

Examination of the substance on the poisoned arrows that I took back with me revealed that there were no animal remains to be seen under the microscope, despite all the talk of snakes and frogs, but there were vegetable fibres. Experiments on animals showed that frogs and mice reacted in the same way as people wounded by the arrows, dying after a while with symptoms similar to those of lock-jaw. Bacteriological examination resulted in the discovery of the spore and bacilli of tetanus. The astounding conclusion was that those wounded were simply infected with tetanus. The stuff on the arrow heads was dry and old, but the bacilli were evidently still active.

No other dangerous or poisonous components could be found; so it was obvious that the Indians somehow or other had managed to put something into the stuff that caused tetanus. This, it was considered, could not have been fortuitous, but must have been deliberate, since the effect was always the same. The Indians had told me, too, that lock-jaw was common in certain parts, and you had to be careful.

The Guajiros' bacteria-arrows, if we may call them that, were thus a weapon that did not have an immediate effect. The brittle arrowhead merely inflicted a painful wound, which normally would not incapacitate the person receiving it. These arrows were used, therefore, when a cruel revenge was to be exacted, the wounded person knowing that, inevitably, he would die in torment. That is the refinement of malice. A bullet is much more merciful. The expert who examined the arrows wrote: 'One must admit that the Guajiro arrows are made with satanic ingenuity.' The thin head with its delicate barbs easily breaks off and remains in the wound. It is mixed with a stuff that causes a disease which kills in a few days through painful attacks of cramp.

It would appear that the poisoned arrows came from the Cojoro Hills. At least several Indians stated that that was

so. One writer says that an old woman from those hills
411 claimed to know how the arrows were poisoned. Otherwise,
she said, only the Cusina knew the secret. That seems most
[579 doubtful, for the Cusina brigands are neither a class nor a
clan which might possess special secrets, but merely a collection of outlawed criminals. There were many indications that they made considerable use of poisoned arrows and that they were firmly convinced of their efficacy. Even if death had been inflicted already by other means, they usually shot their victims with poisoned arrows as well, as an additional safeguard against their escaping. The Cusina and Cojoro Hills belong to the same complex.

The old woman in the Cojoro Hills said that the secret
[782 in the Cusina's way of preparing the arrows was a human
sacrifice. A small boy was taken to a lonely place, where he was killed and some of his blood taken. This was later cooked and the arrows dipped in it. The old woman's account made this ritual murder even more gruesome, in that it made the boy's father the executioner. Of course, in
[593 Guajira a father has quite a different relationship to his
children to that we know, being scarcely accounted in the same family, yet even from the Indian point of view, that must seem cruel. It would be different if the child were one who had been captured in war or bought as a slave.

There is no confirmation of the old woman's statement and it may well have been invented. There are many legends about these poisoned arrows. The woman's account does not mean that the arrows were poisoned by means of the sacrifice, merely that their strength was increased. Blood is always a magical element. If such rites really took place, that would surely point to an African influence brought by runaway negro slaves. The old woman's story, however, scarcely explains how the poison contained tetanus germs. Simmons, the traveller to whom she gave that account of what happened, also said that the poisoned arrows,
[435 *imard*, were sold by the Cusina, who asked eight *varas*, or
ten yards, of cotton cloth for twenty-four. How these tetanus arrows were made remains a mystery that, perhaps, may never be solved.

I have had to anticipate to tell how the secret of the 574
arrows' effect was discovered. Let me now go back to
where we were sitting on our stools talking with the
Indians. It was late in the day and Francisco suggested that
we should stay the night and go on at daybreak to another
place where lived some prosperous Indians who had
many materials and earthenware vessels. They had hammocks
that we could borrow. It was a good suggestion
and our hosts were more than agreeable. They wanted to
vacate one of their huts, but we preferred to sleep in one
of their open sheds. It was cool and, being tired, we fell
asleep while the Indians were still sitting round the fire.

We were awakened by plaintive singing. It was still night. 765
The Guajiro are excessively early risers. In the tropics you
become accustomed to getting up at daybreak, but there 511
on the peninsula everybody woke at three o'clock, when 513
there were still a couple of hours of darkness left. Three
o'clock was even a suitable visiting-hour. They liked to take
advantage of the coolest part of the day, which was from
three to six in the morning. The singing came from the big 765
hut beside us. It was followed by a spoken rigmarole. The
whole was as dreary as a funeral mass, and the voice was an
old woman's. I discovered that it was a sort of pagan morning
prayer for the children, used all over Guajira, in which
an old woman recalled the memory of departed relations.
If any of these had been killed and left unavenged, she
would not neglect to remind the children of the fact and
point out the guilty person. It ended with yet another
wailing song.

What the old woman told them about their ancestors
and injuries received was impressed upon the children's
minds by hearing it repeated every morning in this way. [628]
Thus is a blood feud perpetuated from generation to
generation.

We made ourselves porridge and took our departure as 123
day was breaking. Then we tramped on through the sand
to the next rancheria. There only the women were at home,
but as it is the women who make the things we wished to 342
see, that suited us quite well. The huts were larger than

342 those we had left, but just as simple. Inside were hammocks
352 slung this way and that. Along the walls were carrying-nets
filled with things, and earthenware vessels lay scattered
415 about the floor of hard-trodden sand. Some of these vessels
were grey, others reddish-brown, some had necks and
177 handles. One was an obvious imitation of a Dutch liqueur
jar. It was not far to Puerto Estrella, to which schooners
from the Dutch islands came.

415 Most of the earthenware vessels had red decoration.
531 Some, with wavering lines, were obviously the work of the
oldest of the women, who was frail and almost blind; but
there was no fault in the shape of the vessel. The woven
286 cloths were hung up in a special shelter. The warp hung
vertical and ran like an endless belt over an upper and a
171 lower pole. Several related tribes, members of the Aruak
family, use the same method. When the cloth is finished,
it forms a ring, and is then cut up.

They were working on a man's belt or sash. The everyday
belt was only a couple of inches wide, but sashes intended
for more solemn occasions were some eighteen
inches broad and very colourful. They used red, yellow,
black and white yarn and the pattern was most interesting.
Ceremonial cloaks are also woven for the men, just as
colourful as the sashes, but, to my sorrow, I was never able
to acquire a really fine specimen. They were simply too
764 expensive. The rich chiefs collected them, but custom
622 decreed that they must be wrapped in all their cloaks when
556 they died, which meant that none were inherited. The men's
everyday cloaks I have already described; they pulled them
291 on and then twisted them so that their chest was bared.
The women's dress was considerably more Spartan: it was
a wide tunic, made like a sack with holes for the head and
386 arms, and dyed black with divi-divi or brown with stuff
from some other plant. Their loin-cloth only became visible
when they were working in the shade or indoors and
removed their tunics. It too was black or undyed. They
themselves thought that there was no call to use a nice
patterned cloth for underclothes. Little girls often had
patterned loin-cloths, but then they did not wear tunics.

until they reached marriageable age. Even when they were 291
little they wore belts of seed pearls which were added to
with the years, and other strings of beads were put round [301]
their shoulders and across their chests. A girl of eight or
ten might carry fifteen or twenty pounds weight of beads
and pearls. The string round the waist was made of black
beads, but those on the upper part of the body had to be of
different colours.

The rich used gold and coral. Necklaces of gold beads 301
were traditional, but every other bead had to be black and [556]
be either a seed-pearl or of glass. Poor girls used plaits of
cotton threads on their torsos instead of strings of beads.
All who could, wore sandals with pompoms to protect [241]
their feet against the thorns on the ground.

Women slaves and slave-workers were often not given 291
protective tunics by their masters and therefore went about 567
perpetually half-naked. Being unable to protect themselves
from the sun, they become darker skinned than the others.

The women's dress was thus colourless—unless they had 302
bought some coloured cloth from a white trader. To make
up for this, they painted their faces with patterns, mostly [386]
using the violet dye of a fruit called *genipa*. The men
painted themselves too, but restricted this to a few lines.
Only the women took real pains about painting themselves.
It was mainly their faces they painted, but on occasion their
arms and legs could also be covered with patterns. When on
a journey, the women painted their noses and cheeks all
over with black or red paint. This was not done for the [751]
sake of appearance, but to protect themselves against sunburn.
We tried the method ourselves and found it excellent.
If one did not follow the Indians' example there, one easily
got badly burned. The Indians regard this protective effect [789]
as supernatural—all paint is magical and the pattern has
secret significance. The women showed my wife red and
brown powders that they had and advised her to try them.

All at once the women were in a hurry. They had 881
remembered that the men were due and hastened to the fires
and their pots. We roamed around and came across a small
hut, entirely closed, standing just behind the big houses.

Chief Mauana

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Mauana's daughter, ceremonially painted, beside her mule

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[Facing p. 80]

88 Francisco whispered to me that there was a girl in there. She had been shut up ever since the first signs of womanhood had appeared and would stay there a long time, emerging in due course pale and beautiful. While shut up she was called *majayura*.

The girl was not supposed to show herself to outsiders, but we dangled knives and glass beads and she was allowed out to be photographed. As long as a girl is confined, her family may not see her. She is guarded by an old woman, a near relative, and it was she we bribed—to let us take the picture.

When a girl first menstruates, she at once tells her mother or other close female relative. She is then given an emetic so that she rids herself of any food she ate before she became a woman. The implication being, one imagines, that she also rids herself of all childish ideas, vomiting them up. Then her hair is cut off, and she is rolled naked in a tunic and laid in a hammock that is hoisted up to the roof at the back of the hut. There she must lie, fasting, for three or four days, while an elderly woman relative keeps watch over her. [832] Often an amulet that will make men like her is placed beside her in the hammock. She has to lie motionless and neither scratch nor spit; these could have a deleterious effect.

News of the event has now gone out to relations and others, and everyone turns up wearing their finery, painted and ornamented. Cattle are butchered and they dance the so-called *chichamaya*. Sometimes there are horse-races as well. After some days the girl is allowed to leave her hammock [271] and is washed with water that has been put out in the dew, which is considered to give a light complexion. She may now begin eating small quantities of maize gruel and other prescribed foods. Then she is shut up in the little hut or in a separate part of the larger dwelling-house, but at all events hidden from the world. Not infrequently the little hut is built as part of the greater.

[832] The girl's guardian sees that she drinks certain decoctions of herbs intended to develop her physically, so that she is to the taste of Guajiro men.

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
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Work-hut with warp set up for a man's sash

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The thin Indian dogs licked the last out of the pot

Below: *Indian chiefs, in ceremonial clothes, on their way to a* purchi

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[Facing p.81]

How must a girl look to find favour with them? She must 832 be tall, broad-hipped and have firm prominent breasts and well-rounded curves. Flabbiness the men do not like, but they do not seem to worry about the shape of their women's legs. These, of course, are hidden beneath the wide tunic, but the wind sweeps this against them, outlining them. It is fortunate for the Guajiro women that their men do not attach importance to the shape of their legs, for they are seldom lovely. To our eyes they seem too short and badly shaped. The men attach much importance to gentle, dignified behaviour. The Guajiro girl should have large eyes and good teeth, but the most important thing of all is that she should be light-skinned; that is the hall-mark of gentility. No girl ever neglects her beauty decoctions, not even when [302] she is in the charge of the nuns at the mission station and thus not isolated as the rule is at home. The rules she has to observe and the medicines she must take are of importance not only for her appearance, but also for her physique. If she follows her instructions, she will give birth without difficulty and there will be no risk of the baby being still- [845] born. Her mother and her family are held to be partially responsible if the first-born dies in or after birth, for that means that on some point the complicated rules governing the girl's period of incarceration have been neglected.

A girl is by no means idle while she is shut up; quite 881 the contrary. She spins and weaves industriously, under 868 supervision of the old woman, and learns the details of housekeeping and how to prepare different foods. Actually she will know most of this already, having taken a more or less active part in the work of the household ever since she was able to walk. She also receives instruction in how to behave, is initiated into the duties incumbent upon a housewife, what she must do as spouse and mother, in the various aspects of married life and in the mysteries of sex.

No man is allowed to enter the girl's little hut, and she 881 is not allowed to meet men, receive visitors or be with her 581 family, if visitors come. When the guardian considers that the girl can be let out, usually after a year or two—the news spreads quickly and guests start to come with or without

881 invitation. Again cattle are butchered, and there is drinking
584 and dancing and horse-racing. Numbers of men come to see
if they would like to put themselves forward as suitors. The
more eminent guests are received in the house itself, and the
girl is now present. Her shorn hair has grown and been
trimmed to a page-boy cut, and she wears her best clothes
[754 and new ornaments. She hides her hair clippings carefully
in a bag, for she does not want to risk anyone getting hold
826] of them and using them to acquire power over her by the
arts of magic. Later, she will secretly bury them under a
[789 cow pat. That will help to increase her herds. The droppings
of various animals play a great part in the magic of the
514] Guajiro, and it would seem that there is negro influence
here as well.

881 The girl has now been born again—she is a new person, a
woman. She knows all that an adult woman needs to know
and can do everything that a wife and mother should be
able to do. Pale and lovely, she steps out into life once more
and inquisitive young men swarm round her. The rich
give a big feast, the poor provide simpler fare, but it is
always a great occasion.

[582] A Guajiro man will never marry a girl before she has
undergone this period of confinement, which means that
people seldom marry too early. It is said that in the old days
[595 rich old men with several wives sometimes bought little
831] poor girls as concubines, believing that that would enhance
their virility.

The girl's long segregation is intended to protect her
from the supernatural dangers that are thought to threaten
her, especially during this sensitive period of transition from
childhood to womanhood. The girl can also be dangerous
to others through being exposed to attack by spirits. It is
only practical that during this period she should practise
handicrafts.

262 Going back to the house, we found the women at the
fires, which there were protected by special small cactus
[354] screens. There was no need to have them under a roof at
that time of the year, only to shelter them from the wind.
The pots stood over the fire supported on three stones.

They were of black earthenware ornamented with figures. 252
The women were making maize gruel. There, close to the
green valleys, they ought to have been able to get any [262]
vegetables or roots they liked, yet they clung to their diet
of maize and goat's meat. They had obviously put the pots
on because they expected the men, and sure enough a 492
couple of naked horsemen came galloping up, so at one
with their horses that they looked like centaurs. The
Guajiro Indians can be born on a horse in the literal sense,
if their mothers have to be on a journey at the time. They
look well on horseback, and even the old men rode well. [142]
The younger men were muscular and well-made, and more
pleasing to our eye than the women.

The men had been out enjoying themselves. They had 224
been hunting and their clan mark was painted in blue on 614
their thighs. They must have done that to amuse themselves 304
before they left, for normally both men and women have 302
their clan marks tattooed.

We asked the men what they had hunted with, for they 224
carried neither bows nor firearms, and also what they had 411
hunted, for they did not seem to have got anything. They
laughed and explained that they had had no luck, and
showed us slings of plaited bast. They had been out after
doves or rabbits, but had seen nothing. (The Creoles call
the animal in question a rabbit, but its Latin name is
Sylvilagus cumanicus.) They showed us the short throwing
clubs with which they hunted this and made some practice
throws. They were expert at hitting the target with both
club and sling, but only at distances of twenty to thirty
yards.

A youth showed us a whistle that he said would unfailingly 224
entice a deer if you blew it—provided there was a
deer nearby, as he hastened to add. Judging by the expression
on the women's faces he was no famous hunter. A 439
couple of men also arrived and we were able to think of
doing business. We had no difficulty in buying what we
wanted, provided we paid well. Prices were our great
difficulty, yet these men were less spoiled than elsewhere in
the peninsula. The Guajiro not only trafficked with the

The Guajiro not only trafficked with the
439 whites, but they did a lively trade with each other, using
436 cattle as their currency. Thanks to this there was a form of incipient specialization. Pottery and weapons were the main articles of trade. The rich bought those made by specially
556 skilled craftsmen, who made so much money that they con-
463 centrated largely on producing things to sell. The poor had to make all their own things. Everywhere there were people who could weave and spin, and make pottery, but those who could afford it liked to buy what was best and loveliest.

We wanted to buy articles in general use, but the irritating thing was that the rich did not need to sell and only did so if it amused them, or if they got an especially good price; while the poor had nothing to sell. Those who made these articles as a craft liked to use materials bought from the whites. In the old days they used to weave their textiles of homespun cotton thread dyed with vegetable dyes; now they not infrequently bought dyed woollen yarn from the whites, but in that remote part of the peninsula they had not yet begun to do so. We saw that they had plenty of hammocks made of bast and cotton yarn. These were larger and more comfortable than was usual and were made with a different technique. The hammock is the genuine Indian
513 bed, invented in the jungles of South America before the white man ever came there, and has the advantage of being easy to take about and cool to lie in, while the sleeper is protected from all the unpleasant and dangerous insects of the ground.

Throughout the journey we had slept in hammocks—you have to get used to them before you find them comfortable—as long as there was somewhere to hang them. We now told the Indians that we wanted proper hammocks, the kind they themselves used, for we had bought ours from the whites. That started the bargaining.

There was seldom any question of buying for cash—they
439 did not have much confidence in the white man's money—
436 so we had to barter for what we wanted. We soon discovered that apart from our knives, the Indians undervalued all our goods. If we had not had a large case of knives we would never have managed to assemble the collections

we wanted to make. After knives, maize was the best 439
medium of exchange, and we could buy that from the monks 436
as long as we used the mission station as our headquarters,
but once we went further afield we were not able to carry
any to use for barter. Cloth was also in demand. We had a
couple of bales of the white material the Indians usually
bought. Unfortunately we had not been able to get the best
barter commodity of all: tuma beads. These are large
polished stone beads of different sizes made of cornelian
and other stones, for all of which the Guajiro has special
names. Tuma beads are found in old Indian graves,
especially in and around Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, [172]
though these graves are also said to exist in Guajira. However, it was not advisable, we were told, to try and prove that or to embark on archaeological excavations. To do so might easily lead to trouble.

Later we made a rich find of tuma beads in graves in Sierra Nevada, but then we were not able to go back to Guajira. The richer Indians especially valued tuma very highly and often paid as much as a horse for one bead. We could not have used anything as precious for our small deals, but they would have been useful for getting riding and pack-animals. As it was we bought a couple of hammocks and some earthenware vessels.

One must be careful not to do a Guajiro over a deal. That 439
can involve one in difficulties and a claim for damages. It goes without saying that, in the Indians' view, it was we who came off second best, and we would not have had it otherwise.

We took leave of our hosts feeling slightly guilty because 800
of that photograph which was a secret between us, the girl and her guardian, but also satisfied with our first expedition in Macuira. We loaded a donkey with our purchases which an Indian drove direct to Nazaret, for we were to make a detour in order to visit another rancho. The sand made very heavy going and we decided for the future we would ride, especially as we should be going further afield.

As soon as we drew near the next rancho, we realized that something was afoot. We could hear a buzz of voices

000 and shrieks. Francisco put on a spurt and got there ahead
of us; then he turned and called to us:

'Hurry, there's a child being born!'

He pointed to our camera, evidently thinking that that was an event to be filmed.

844 The Indians consider childbirth a natural function that
does not need to be hidden. It often takes place in the
presence of the entire household, even of children, and if
neighbours arrive, they can be present too. Even intimate
[833] marital acts take place quite openly, to the amazement and
[834] embarrassment of a white person. We thought it best for
my wife to go in to the woman in labour, while we sat and
talked with the grandfather, who was sitting by himself by
the fire. Soon some children came and joined us, having
evidently been sent away from the scene of the birth, where
something apparently had gone wrong. Now they could
look their fill at two white men instead.

The old grandfather was talkative. He told us how the
[591] eldest son must always come into the world with the wife's
family. There, too, a newly married couple live for the
first year. If they are staying elsewhere, the husband takes
his wife to her parents' home when the child is expected.
[843] For a long time she will have been taking various decoctions
of herbs and observed certain precautionary measures and
rules intended to influence the birth favourably. The wife's
family is responsible that all will go well. Should the child
or mother die, the man has the right to demand damages of
his wife's family. On the other hand, said the old man, the
second child is born in the father's family, and they must
take the risk. Subsequent children can be born in the
couple's own home.

843 A pregnant woman must keep away from funerals, graves
and anything to do with death, and it is very important
[825] that she takes care not to catch sight of a snake. Snakes have
a bad influence on parturition. Under no circumstances
may a husband kill a snake while his wife is pregnant. A
child is a weak, defenceless being and exposed to attack by
dangerous spirits. There is an intimate connection between
the father and the child, and what the father does is of

importance. Thus, while the child is on the way, he must not 843
hunt with firearms, but only with bow and arrow. If he [224]
goes on a journey of any length after the child has come into
the world, he must lay his saddle-girth round the babe or
put his foot on its chest before he leaves. If he forgets to
do that one can lay a pair of his old sandals on its breast.

If the first-born dies, it is feared that the others will do 766
the same. The baby is placed head down in an urn with a 844
lid and buried beneath a certain kind of tree. The mother
often has to undergo another period of confinement, it
being thought that all the rules had not been observed
during her real period of puberty, and that that had an unfavourable
effect on childbirth. If all the instructions are
not observed, there is danger that the other children will
also die.

My wife came back and told us that the child was born 844
and all had gone well. It was the third child. The woman had lain on her back on the ground with legs straddled, and they had strewn a thick layer of fine sand under her crotch, so that the babe should land softly. An aunt of the woman's helped her, and her husband was there and helped to lift her and hold her during the final pains. The mother was now to keep quiet for a few days and, above all, not expose herself to the sun.

The old man explained that the rich let their women rest 846
for weeks after giving birth, living on maize gruel and [556]
light food, while poor mothers have to go out and work as
usual straight away. The child has the breast in the evening 853
when the mother goes to bed; at three in the morning when
everyone gets up, and occasionally during the day. In the
better families the child is weaned with the help of maize
gruel and goat's milk and a female slave takes charge of it,
the mother having so many other duties. There are even
some who keep wet-nurses, he said.

Then more men appeared and a woman who sat behind 854
my wife, just outside the circle. I distributed tobacco and conversation became lively. My wife was surprised that Indian babies were allowed to sit upright so early. She was told that at first the mother supports it with her hand, and

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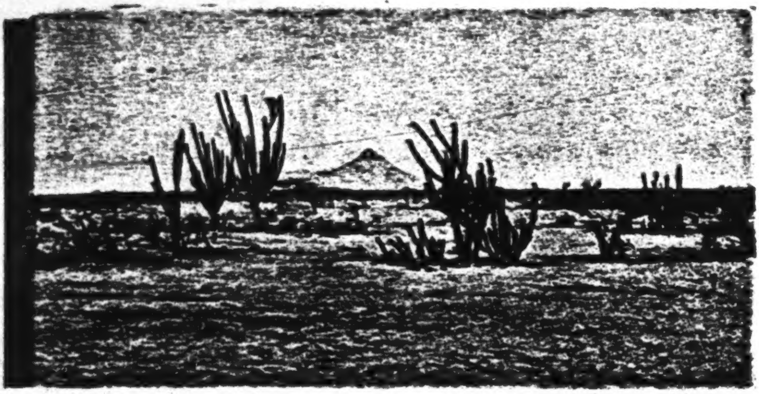

La Teta rising above the cactus steppe

Typical Guajira landscape with divi-divi trees

[facing p. 88]

854 also encourages it to crawl and walk. Indian babies can sit without help, when a white baby is still unable to raise itself. At six months the brown Indian baby is already a toddler.

868 The conversation turned on to the upbringing of children. Even in its earliest games the Indian babe imitates its parents' occupations, thus amusing itself and learning at the same time. The Indians are very careful to see that from the beginning the children learn to distinguish between the men's and women's spheres of work. An Indian father would be very indignant if he saw his baby son playing at cooking, which is not male work. Therefore the son accompanies his father to the herds even as quite an infant, while his sister will stay at home.

861 We had already noticed that children were sometimes
chastized, which is not usual among other primitive
Indians. The old women saw that they behaved themselves
and were not disobedient. Food was rationed both for the
[262] children and the grown-ups, and it was considered very
shabby to pinch another's helping. To drop anything edible
on to the ground was strictly punished, and the worst
offence of all was for a child in anger to throw food on to
the ground and trample it. Possibly this was yet another
relic of Moorish custom, for in Morocco it is considered a
serious crime to spill crumbs of bread. When the children
became bigger they were merely scolded, but they were
604 then generally no longer under their parents' supervision,
855 but with relations with whom they spend long periods. The
868 first-born son usually grows up with his eldest maternal
uncle, who is the boy's real guardian, and he teaches him
cattle-rearing and agriculture and the queer laws of his
people.

231
857 Girls also go to their mother's relations and help in the
household. We had already seen how a Guajiro boy had to
[602] work. He had to be at it from the moment he stepped out of
his hammock at three in the morning. First he and some
others gathered the cattle to water them. If they were
watered at a deep casimba, he had to run up and down with
water-jars to fill the troughs of hollowed-out trunks. He

milked the cows and then watched the herds, keeping a particular 857 eye on the calves, kids and lambs, which a beast of prey might take. He also had to look out for two-legged 231 thieves. He soon learned where pasture was best and most suitable. He could see to the cattle, knew what to do when they fell ill and how to break in horses. The older ones were expert at tracking animals that had strayed—they could do 857 this at the age of ten. He would have made himself a bow and 224 arrows almost as soon as he could walk and have practised with them. With these he shot edible lizards and small birds. He set snares for doves. He watched at the men's deer traps by night and he took part in the slaughter. During 857 the rains he helped to weed his maternal uncle's plots and prepare them for sowing. If he belonged to a fisher family on the coast he had to take part in his father's trips out to sea and dive for pearls. When not otherwise occupied he made carrying-nets.

'Do you see those,' said the old man, pointing to some bottles and bowls of calabash rind lying on a roof drying in the sun. 'It is the young ones who make those. They scrape [322] out the inside and then carve figures in the rind while it is fresh and soft. You want to buy them, you say? That's nothing to sell. The children will gladly give you them.'

The children brought us their calabashes. They had to explain what the figures signified and naturally I gave them things in exchange.

It goes without saying that both boys and girls often have to run errands and sometimes act as nursemaid. Little girls have to learn to fetch water and look after the fire. Then they are shown how to make maize gruel and they have to practise baking maize cakes. They soon get to know all the wild and cultivated plants used in the Indian household. Then they take part in the harvest, which is the women's affair.

In those families which own many head of cattle, the 855 sons, once they return from staying with their uncles, are often left much to themselves, for their fathers have no time for them. Their fathers neglect their upbringing and never administer physical punishment, since they risk being called

855 upon to pay damages by their wives' clans if they do. They will give their sons cattle—sons do not inherit from their [428] fathers—and these they have to look after themselves from [431] the age of fifteen or sixteen. In the better families youths of this age are often rather wild, trying to imitate the older men, drinking more than they can take, being noisy and butting in when their elders are talking. The grown-ups take this quite calmly, pretending they are not there. 'They grow out of it,' they say.

885 The young men usually settle down when they marry. They must then stand on their own feet and assume family responsibilities.

We now had a much better idea of life in Guajira. As we 600 slowly waded through the sand back to the mission station, Gladtvet said:

'One ought to ride on camels here.'

Perhaps the Indians ought to have had camels. That would have made another reason to call the peninsula the Arabia of South America.

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7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957

SC13 Goajiro SC13

CHAPTER 7

Laws with No Tablets

As we were riding through a parched and savage landscape we saw at a distance a number of mounted warriors divided into two groups, which were drawn up in semicircles facing each other. We thought there must be some ceremony in progress and wanted to ride across. They were all magnificently got up and armed to the teeth with bows, arrows and guns. Our Indian guide stopped us. 628

'Be careful! Be careful! That is a *purchi!*'

We knew what that meant. A dispute had arisen between two clans, through someone having been offended, robbed or perhaps killed. The victim's family had asked for help and the matter was now to be settled at a meeting with the offender's clan. Damages would be demanded and paid, or there would be a fight—the start of a blood-feud. One should be careful not to get involved in that sort of thing.

These Indians have no police, no authority that dispenses justice; they have to judge and settle matters themselves with the help of their families, yet in accordance with their laws. These are curious, detailed and logical. They are, of course, unwritten, mere customary rights, but they are strictly observed and applied with the utmost consistence. Before we crossed into Indian territory, the Creoles had urged us to make ourselves acquainted with the Indians' laws, as otherwise we could get into trouble quite unwittingly. 671

Soon after seeing the purchi we met the region's most powerful chief, Mauana. We were on our way to a small rancho, when we caught sight of some Indians working on a cactus fence. We wanted to film them, and had just got 622

622 our cameras up, when a plump, middle-aged Indian came
rushing up and began giving the fencers orders in a stern
voice. He had not noticed us.

'That's Mauana,' Francisco whispered respectfully.

[291] Mauana was wearing only a guayuco and brow-band,
which is the genuine Guajiro garb. When he saw us, he at
[191] once spoke to us in good Spanish, which not all the chiefs
know, for the Guajiro cling stubbornly to their own tongue.
Mauana, of course, had heard of us. He now invited us to
go with him and see how he lived.

241 First, we came to his plantations, which many in the
622 peninsula must have envied him. There was a green valley,
one of the oases in the semi-desert, where manioc, sugar-cane and maize grew, shaded by coconut palms, mango
trees and bananas. The plots were watered by narrow canals
[312] which all came from the one stream in Guajira that never
ran dry.

Mauana was obviously a strict master and he ordered his
622 slaves about like a sergeant-major, but his plantation was a
model one and he was an efficient chief who maintained
order in a most commendable way. Once or twice he had
caught white criminals who had hidden in the hills there
and sent them back to the authorities—to their great disappointment. He lived simply, as all Guajiro do, but he had
an unusually well-built house that was completely roofed.

We told Mauana of the purchi we had seen, and he used this as an excuse to give us a lesson in Indian law. Such an account of the Indians' social order and laws was both amusing and interesting, and it showed how different from ours the primitive's conception of justice can be. One knows all too well what mistakes colonial authorities have made through misunderstanding the native conception of these matters, especially of the rights of ownership.

614 The Indians, as has already been said, are divided into
clans in which relationship follows the female line. Children
[551] thus take their mothers' names. Their fathers belong to a
different clan and strictly speaking are not related to them.
It is their eldest maternal uncle who is their head and
[604] guardian, and it is from him, not from their father, that they

inherit. They hold him in great respect. A man's chief heir 614
is thus his eldest nephew and he takes particular care of him. [604]
During his lifetime a well-to-do man will give his sons [428]
enough cattle to ensure that they will not be left destitute
when he dies. Each clan has its name and its symbol: the [431]
jaguar, rattle-snake, king vulture, dog, etc., but this has no
connection with totemism or magic. The Indians think no
more of their name's meaning than we do, when people
have animal names. They often joke about them.

A number of the clans are large and powerful, others
small and weak, sometimes entirely dependent on one of
the big clans. Those born into a big clan are fortunate, for
they have power behind them and can count on support
and help if they are insulted, threatened or robbed, for the
members of a clan stick together whatever happens, united
by the bond of blood. The same blood flows in all their
veins. The Indians imagine that the human grows from a [843]
drop of the mother's blood, and that the foetus feeds on
the new vital fluid—for they know that menstruation
ceases during pregnancy.

A man does not possess the right to dispose of his blood [752]
or his life. They both belong to the clan. If he hurts himself
so that blood flows he must pay damages to his clan for
shedding their blood. Suicide is also punishable, though [762]
not at all unusual. After an unsuccessful attempt at suicide,
the clan will claim damages, even if no blood has been
shed. An Indian wanting to take his own life hangs himself.
Such importance is attached to the shedding of blood, that, 683
if someone strikes another and makes his nose bleed, this is 614
regarded as an aggravating circumstance and increases the
compensation the victim demands. His whole clan will
consider itself insulted. In fact, one can really say that an
Indian only has the usufruct of his life and blood.

It is the same with the land. The land in the peninsula is 423
owned by the clans, each of which has its own defined terri- 614
tory. The cultivable areas are not large and lie round the
few water-courses that are not dry during most of the year.
These plantations are traditionally exploited by certain
families in each clan and are inherited by the eldest nephews.

423 It is, of course, only the usufruct that is inherited. The land
614 can neither be sold nor given away, for it belongs to the
clan. All members of a clan have the right to pasture their
herds in the clan's territories, and every man also has the
right to graze his beasts and to use wood and water in the
lands belonging to his wife's clan. That is one of the advan-
tages he acquires in return for the bride-price he has paid.
565 There has developed a class distinction unusual among
614 Indians on the primitive level. A man of simple origins can
sometimes marry into a high-born family, but he does not
become any the better for that, though his children belong
to their mother's aristocratic clan. It is, however, seldom
that a man of humble family can get himself a girl from the
upper classes—that could only happen if he had inherited
or had relatives who could help him pay the bride-price.
583 This is so high that a young man almost always has to have
614 the help of his clan to pay it. The relatives of a girl of really
good family may demand £2000 worth of cattle, while a
girl of humbler stock can be had for £50 worth. The
amount can be paid in money, but that is only done in the
south, in the areas belonging to Venezuela, where the
Indians are more accustomed to coins and have confidence
in gold.

It must not be imagined that this is a question of purchase
like buying a donkey, a cow or a slave. It is a transaction
that concerns both clans. One should not marry within one's
[178] own clan. In the old days that was forbidden, but now they
are not so strict, since the clans are often split into local
sub-groups. The whole marriage transaction is well adapted
to the social and economic system. (When, during the first
oil rush, white workers from the Maracaibo oil fields bought
poor girls, usually of half-breed parents, those were tran-
sactions whose legality under Guajiro law was merely
fictitious.) The bridegroom's family helps him to pay the
bride-price and contributes generously if the girl is of good
family. The bride-price is to some extent regarded as
compensation for what the family expended on the girl
while she was growing up.

When a couple's first daughter marries, the father asks

for her as much as will enable him to repay the cattle the 583
clan laid out for him when he married. The amounts ob-
tained for younger daughters are also distributed among 614
the family in a certain way. Payment of the bride-price
confers a number of benefits. During the first year the newly [591]
married couple usually live as the guests of the bride's
family. As has been said, the husband has the right to use the land owned by his wife's clan. The bride always brings a dowry in the form of ornaments and household utensils, often of cattle as well. The husband must look after the cattle, unless, as happens, the girl's family sends its own herdsman to see to them. The bride usually provides all the furnishings of the huts, as well as materials, hammocks and other textiles.

These advantages offset the bride-price to a quite considerable extent. The husband knows, too, that his wife's relations will keep an eye on her when he is away, for if she betrays him, he can return her to her family and require refund of the bride-price and payment of compensation. Thus the bride-price also acts as a guarantee against a grass widow kicking over the traces.

If the husband does not fulfil his duties, or if he treats
his wife badly, her family can take her back without return- [586]
ing the bride-price. After that the man will naturally get no help from his clan, if he wishes to get himself another wife.

It is not always possible for the groom and his relations to pay all the bride-price immediately. In such cases it is possible to pay by instalments. The groom pays a large proportion of the price when the bride is handed over to him. If he is unable to pay the balance at the time fixed, he must give the girl back, losing what he has already paid. The girl is now less valuable in the marriage market, being second-hand, so to speak. The man is made to pay for the time he has had her and thereby makes up for the lower
price she can command, if a new suitor turns up. According [684]
to this principle a seducer must pay compensation to the
family of the girl he has seduced. It sometimes happens that a couple fall in love and the parents approve, but the young

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796
A chichamaya in full swing

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482
764
First burial. The dead person's bier is being carried out from its shelter

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764
The after-burial. A medicine man guarding the urns containing the dead person's bones

[facing p. 96]

man cannot immediately pay any worthwhile part of the 583 bride-price. The young man may then abduct the girl with 614 the tacit consent of her parents, and thereby postpone having to pay the bride-price. After some time, the girl's relatives will require payment, but meantime his family will have been trying to scrape together at least a first instalment.

Genuine abduction does occur occasionally, but only when the man knows that the girl's clan is weak and that her relatives will thus have difficulty in claiming their rights. He will take the girl as far away as possible. If he is caught, her relatives will try to demand a bride-price. Perhaps he is already tired of the girl by then and wants to return her. She is the clan's property and is not being returned un- 583 damaged, so the man must pay damages for seduction and, 565 if the girl is pregnant, also for childbirth.

In the lower classes that would dispose of the matter. 614 The baby would in any event be taken into the mother's 684 clan and have her name. In the upper classes a girl would be turned out if she had had such an accident and the considerable damages required had not been paid immediately. The clan's prestige cannot be allowed to suffer.

Indian girls never keep a seducer's name secret, but at once tell their family who he is.

Among the lower classes cases of wives eloping are said to occur. The man to whom they have gone can legalize the position by paying compensation to the husband. If the husband agrees to do a deal, he cannot ask as much as the bride-price he himself paid, for the girl is by then less valuable.

It follows from all this that a woman has not the right to 562 dispose of her own body. She belongs to her mother's 583 family until she marries, and her closest relatives must be compensated for any injury done her. Once the man has paid the bride-price she becomes his property. If she is [768] widowed, she is inherited along with the rest of his effects by his nephews (sister's sons) and she has to purchase her freedom from them, paying a sum equivalent to the bride-price less what she is held to have lost in value since marriage.

562
riage. A Guajiro woman has no right to sell her body. The [548]
law does not recognize prostitution.

A married woman's relatives and clan do not leave her 562
entirely in her husband's hands. He may not do as he likes 614
with her, nor cause her suffering. Suffering and discomfort 844
she is bound to experience in childbirth, however, and of
that he is the primary cause; thus whether as a result of
legal or illegal relations, the man must compensate the [431]
mother for her confinement by giving her family a few
cattle. The woman herself may not eat their meat under
any circumstances.

Originally the Guajiro clans were exogamous; members 582
were not allowed to marry within the clan. That is no 614
longer insisted upon, but not only brothers and sisters,
but maternal males and cousins on the mother's side, are
still reckoned among the forbidden degrees. It is unthinkable that an Indian girl should marry her maternal uncle;
that would be like having her father for her husband. It once 835
happened that an uncle and niece had a secret relationship
and the girl became pregnant. A monk married them, but
the Indians regarded the relationship as a heinous crime
and the whole district reacted so violently that the couple [626]
had to leave the peninsula and go far away, where there was
no risk of meeting members of their tribe.

There is nothing to prevent an Indian getting himself [595]
several wives. Infrequently white men have married into 648
Guajiro families and they too have had to pay a bride-price. 582
A number of poor Creoles have contracted Guajiro marriages with poor girls. I have already mentioned how foreign oil workers made Guajiro marriages. In those early days there were no arrangements made for employees' families, and the Guajiro girls suited those primitive conditions very well, though as a rule such marriages with Indian girls were very short-lived, as those of the Creoles with them still are. The girl is soon abandoned, if that can be done without risk, the girl's family in such cases being powerless. So the Indians told me.

The monks had already told us that where Creoles had married Guajiro girls of good family, those marriages had

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SC13 Goajiro SC13

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A dance partner

Indian girls in their tunics

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492

Women on a journey, well wrapped up against the sun

[Facing p. 97]

648 usually lasted. Here, of course, the girl's family had power
582 and the means to check that all was well. In such marriages
the husband was considered liable to provide the household equipment, as well as paying a bride-price.

If a Creole marries a Guajiro girl according to the Catholic rites there are all sorts of complications, even if he has paid the bride-price, for the European concept of the father's rights conflicts with the Indian matriarchal law. Problems of relationship and inheritance, the separation of the child from its clan and many other things all provide problems which cause the bride's family a lot of trouble. But that is enough about Indian marriage.

628 Since all members of a clan are of the same blood, the Indians consider themselves justified in wreaking vengeance on a near relative, if they are unable to lay hands on the actual culprit. This can give rise to a whole chain of acts of vengeance, a real vendetta. In the old days all white people were held to be of one clan, and so the Indians thought that they could avenge an injury inflicted by a white person on the first member of his clan they came across. 'To travel in Guajira is like sitting on a keg of gunpower beside a fire; you are afraid the whole time that a spark will cause a catastrophe', was what used to be said.

672 Guajiro law always tries to find a scapegoat, and one must remember that when having any dealings with the Indians. If I take a man into my service or merely send him on an errand, I am responsible if anything happens to him and for anything he himself may do to others all the time his mission lasts.

A mother sent her little girl on a donkey to fetch water. The girl took a playmate up on the saddle beside her. The other little girl fell off and hurt herself quite slightly, yet the family had to pay considerable damages.

A mestizo family, receiving unexpected visitors, took an Indian girl to help in the kitchen. The girl cut her finger and her family demanded compensation. After all blood had been shed. The girl was of humble family and thus no large sum could be claimed, yet according to our ideas what had to be paid was a very great deal for a mere cut:

4 goats, 5 pigs, 15 hens, 25 skeins of yarn, 5 bars of soap (an 672 expensive commodity) and some mirrors and handkerchiefs. Employees are very well insured, it would seem. If an employee destroys anything belonging to a third party, the employer has to pay twice its value or more. One's responsibility is not confined to what persons in one's service may do, but extends to animals and inanimate objects if one lends them. If I let an Indian ride my horse and the horse throws him off, I have to pay; and if someone cuts himself on a knife belonging to me, I have to pay—for it was my knife that did it.

It can even be risky to give advice in Guajira: for if you suggest a course of action and things go wrong, you may have to pay compensation. That is why the Indians will seldom tell you the way when you ask it.

A host is responsible to his guests, even if they are self- 672 invited. Hospitality is sacred and one cannot refuse to 574 receive someone seeking shelter. If the guest is ill, the host looks after him as best he can, but immediately sends for one of his relations. As soon as a relative arrives the host's responsibilities cease, but if the guest should die before the relative gets there, the host is liable for damages, hard as it may seem. On the other hand, if a person suffering from an infectious disease goes to someone else's house, it is the guest who is responsible and must pay his host damages.

If two guests start fighting the host is considered jointly responsible, for if he had not invited them there would never have been a fight. If the others present do not try to avert the quarrel, they must pay up too.

Insults and calumny are contrary to the law, and it is 683 especially serious if one reviles another's mother's family. Among themselves the Indians consider it disparaging 578 to be addressed in Spanish, instead of in their mother tongue.

Every Indian has a personal name used only by his 551 nearest and dearest. For an outsider to pronounce this calls 683 for a heavy penalty, as it does to speak the name of someone dead. As soon as it is learned that someone has died, all those with the same name at once change it for another. The

551 idea being that to speak the name renews the grief of the
683 dead person's relatives. An old man of the Uriana clan, who
called himself Juan, died. Some time later some of his
relatives were at an entertainment, at which too was a
woman of the Jusuá clan with her little son. A Creole asked
this woman what her little boy was called and without
thinking, she replied: 'Juan'. The dead man's relatives then
claimed damages because she had mentioned the dead man's
name, and she had to pay them a bullock, even though it was
a Spanish name. It was the reminder of their grief that had
764 to be compensated. It is also an offence to tread on an
Indian's grave.

683 It is more expensive to strike a person than to insult him.
One should not answer an insult with a blow, but a well-to-do Indian will not infrequently do so and gladly pay the
damages. If an Indian strikes another without hurting him,
he must pay nonetheless, because he has treated the other
as a slave—it being only one's own slaves that one has the
right to strike. If anyone tears a tunic, he must not only
685 replace it, but pay for the shame the other felt at going
about in rags.

A thief, if caught, must repay several times the value of what he has stolen. Not infrequently he must pay with his life, especially if the person he has robbed is a powerful personage, as he usually is, and the thief belongs to a weak clan that cannot help his family to exact blood-money.

567 A thief can be forced to pay by working for his victim. He
becomes a debtor-slave. Murder, manslaughter and being
682 the cause of another's death are the most serious crimes.
They do not have these actual categories. The penalty for
manslaughter is very heavy; if agreement cannot be reached
on it, it can sometimes lead to war, a war in which the
enemy must either be exterminated or enslaved.

628 It is on such occasions that a purchi is held, at which you
can see the groups of warriors drawn up facing each other,
while a chief presides.

622 The chief is a mighty person and will have been chosen
628 for his excellent qualities, yet he is not a judge, but rather
advocate and mediator. His role is as conciliator. He will

already have talked with both parties and know their points 622
of view. One can imagine what takes place. The killer's 628
family wishing an amicable settlement: 'It is best that we do
not begin a war, brothers,' says their leader. He offers
reasonable compensation, paints a picture of the horrors of
war, the continual fear of attack, the burning houses, the
women violated and enslaved, the blood-feud continuing
from generation to generation, and, by way of contrast,
describes the calm of peaceful work.

The other side are spoiling for a fight. 'I am rich and need no damages. My men are brave and prepared for a fight. I wish that we measure our strength.'

If a settlement is not arrived at, a fresh meeting is arranged, and meanwhile there is a state of latent war. Even if a fine is agreed upon, peace is not restored until the fine has actually been paid. This is probably done in stages, and that is why the Creoles say that the Indians can kill each other on the instalment system.

To bring about another's death, whether intentionally or 682
unintentionally, has grave consequences for the person
responsible. The fine that has to be paid is often ruinous.
The homicide becomes indebted to his relatives who have to
help him pay. Also, for magical reasons, he has to submit to
a lengthy period of isolation and to certain restrictions
which prevent him attending to his affairs and make him
endure certain privations.

If a white man has killed an Indian, he should try to get 682
to safety outside the peninsula, because even if he pays a 648
fine for manslaughter, the Indians will seek his life. Three
white men must die for each Indian killed, according to the
old rule. They long insisted on regarding all white people [604]
as being of the one clan, though nowadays they know that
they are split up into different peoples. They would now
never dare extend vengeance for an injury inflicted by a
native mulatto to, say, a fair-haired foreigner from the
north.

The foregoing are but a few points of Guajiro law which 671
is really much more complicated than these would make it
appear. The law ought really to be the same for all, but

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671 when it is a case of getting one's rights, the men of property and the members of the big clans are nowadays favoured. All this and much more Mauana and his friends told us, things it was useful and even necessary for us to know.

CHAPTER 8

Innocence and the Fertility Dance

Mauana invited us to visit him again, and we were glad 622
to do so. We liked him and his oasis. Also he taught us
a lot, for he was knowledgeable and intelligent, a proper
chief who was not called *cacique* just out of politeness, as is
the case with many rich mestizos near the border.

The Indians expect a great deal of their chief. He has to be an adroit negotiator, able to uphold the clan's rights and support its members. In war he is the leader who must be in the van and never yield. He must be ever hospitable, a good speaker and in every way a worthy representative. Mauana seemed to be such a chief.

Our only means of repaying his hospitality was to give a 648
great porridge feast—we had a lot of oatmeal with us. The 574
Indians loved our porridge, perhaps because it was reminis-
cent of their own maize gruel, which we ourselves far pre-
ferred. This feast took place on Mauana's next visit to
Nazaret, and after it he was eager for us to pay him another
visit, promising to show us dancing.

On our arrival we were introduced to the 'princess', his 622
unmarried daughter. Mauana wanted us to photograph her. 123
She was not pretty, but typically Indian in appearance. She
had to put on all her finery and her paint, and her mule was
saddled and decked out as for a ceremonial occasion. She
had gold and coral at her neck, ankles and wrists, and large
spiral patterns painted on her cheeks. Her mule had three
tails: its own and two artificial ones, such being the fashion
then. The girl was no film star: she was as stiff as a ram-rod
and not to be thawed. Luckily, her skin looked light on the 622
photograph, as every Guajiro girl desires it to be. Mauana 142

622 142 would not have been pleased if we had not managed to get her looking nice and pale. In reality her complexion was perhaps a shade too dark. Mauana asked if everyone in our country was as fair-skinned as my wife, and when I assured him that they were, he wondered whether he should not send his daughter to Sweden for a time to let her become lighter. The girl did not appear to be so very young. Francisco told us that Mauana was not finding it easy to marry her off. Being the greatest and richest chief in the Macuira Hills, with plantations that were always watered, the price he must ask for her was considerable by Indian standards, and though there had been no lack of inquiries, no deal had yet been made. All this according to Francisco. The price could not be lowered. The girl's uncle insisted on that, as she did too. Every Indian girl is proud of commanding a high price. That not only shows that she is of good family, but also that her mother and grandmother cost a lot too, in other words that she is of an old, propertied family.

581 'You often hear people say,' Francisco added, 'that it is better to pay little for a wife from a poor family who has been taught to work well, than to give much for a rich girl who only wants to be waited upon. But the fact is that the rich girl's family will provide her with what she might need to live according to her status even after she has married. She will still be supported from home. That, of course, lightens the husband's duties: so it isn't so silly to marry a rich wife,' and he sighed heavily.

584 Mauana then joined us and he too began discussing marriage. We had heard a certain amount on this subject already, but listened nonetheless attentively. A suitor does not go in person to ask for a girl's hand; he sends a proxy, his eldest maternal uncle or, if possible, a chief on his mother's side. His mother usually goes as well, Sometimes a whole deputation arrives, to be given a ceremonial reception.

[431] The delegates bring with them gifts in the form of necklaces of gold beads and tuma stones. A man like Mauana could expect several of these. If the gifts are accepted, as almost always they are, they at once start discussing the

bride-price. (A refusal by the girl's family to accept the offerings can lead to a serious conflict between the two families.) The deputation then returns home and informs the suitor. He does not try to haggle. That is not done. Also he has a fairly good idea beforehand what he will be asked to pay. If his relatives can afford it, the price is paid in a lump sum in cows, which is the grandest method of payment. The cows are driven to the bride's house by slaves and followed by the bridegroom's maternal uncles, who are responsible for making settlement. They are given a festive reception and return with gifts of meat from a freshly slaughtered animal. The bridegroom does not go on this occasion either. He arrives later with some cows for his mother-in-law, which constitute a reward for the bridal bed, a beautiful hammock she has woven. This symbolizes his right of possession of the girl. 584

In the old days it was considered that a bride ought to be virgin, although now that manners are not so strict, this is not so strictly insisted upon. The white man usually explains the girl's period of confinement as being intended to protect her innocence; yet she would surely have more opportunity to kick over the traces when living by herself in a little hut, than if she were with her family and always under their eye. Among the better families at least, a husband can demand return of part of the bride-price if he discovers that he is not the first to enjoy the girl's favours. A bride who is not a virgin should thus command a lower price than a virgin. A girl with a child, or a wife another man has returned, commands even less, just as with the Moors, though that is not to say that the custom came from them. 585 836

Nowadays a sensible girl tells her intended husband if she has had an affaire, before the bride-price is settled, and thereby complications are avoided. A young man will seldom hesitate to marry a girl making such a confession.

A man's inmost thoughts often emerge under the influence of intoxication, when he sits in his hammock improvising a song, as the Indians do. Scornfully he may chant: 'Ah, ah, ah, ah, when I married my wife was not a maid.' If she was, he will sing: 'Ah, ah, ah, my bride was innocent.' [533]

585 Mauana said that while she is in confinement a girl will
have been taught, among other things, the attentions custom
[881] requires her to show her husband.

When he arrives home, she hastens to hang up his hammock
593 and offer him something to drink. She at once prepares
a meal, if one is not yet ready. The master of the house has
[264] his own crockery, from which he alone eats, and his wife
must see that he has his favourite dishes and that they are
properly cooked. If he has returned from a journey or from
hunting, she must see that he has water to wash in and a
clean guayuco. Once he has taken his place in the hammock,
she sits on the ground and tells him the day's events. If he
falls asleep, she sits in silence.

When the husband's friends or other people come to see
[574] him, the wife's place is again on the ground beside his
hammock. She does not butt in upon the men's conversation,
but knows how to be amusing if she is spoken to. She
must see that each guest has a hammock to rest in and offer
everyone refreshments. Men are proud to have such a
hostess for a wife.

[574] In the husband's absence a wife must receive visitors
courteously, but observe caution, if they are men. She will
hang a hammock under a roofed shelter close to the house,
but will not let the visitor inside. She will then offer him
refreshments and sit down beside his hammock with some
handwork.

It goes without saying that she must take good care of her
husband's belongings and property, for he is often forced
to be away with his herds. She must also take care of her
[273] husband himself, when he is drunk, as he not infrequently
is. When fights occur at feasts, the women, as we know,
[579] throw themselves between the men to avoid bloodshed. A
wife is responsible for her husband, when he is drunk. If
she has not bothered to keep an eye on him and he is beaten
or killed, the fault is hers. Or he may take his own life
[762] while intoxicated—suicide for mere trifles is not unusual—
and then too she can be held responsible, if she has not
intervened. If he hurts her or destroys any of her things
while he is drunk, she knows that he will make rich amends

later, for he has been brought up always to try and make 593
things right.

During her period of isolation a girl also learns how to 881
satisfy her husband erotically and always to be ready, when 864
he is excited. To retain his love she may employ magic as
well as her own natural powers of attraction. Knowing that [832]
a woman loses some of her looks and attraction during
pregnancy, wives often try, after having had several
children, to hinder fertilization by taking certain herbal [842]
drugs and by magical means.

'Polygamy is permitted, is it not, Mauana?' 595

'Yes, a man can take several wives. As long as he pays the bride-price, no one can say anything, but her family would never allow a better-class girl to become the second wife of anyone. And you see, custom decrees that a Guajiro wife, whether the first or a concubine, must acquiesce if the husband takes a new wife. Similarly, it is considered that wives ought to live in peace and friendship. They must receive a new concubine cordially and all show their best side to the husband. They must help each other to watch the children and not display jealousy if the husband prefers one to the others.

'That is how it should be, but the reality is quite different. Very often the wives live in the same house, which naturally leads to conflict more easily than when each has her own hut. Jealousy or envy are common in these harems. Enmity and quarrelling are not infrequent, nor is actual fighting. The wives spy upon each other, destroy each other's things and make all sorts of scenes. One or other perhaps comes to hate the husband. It is said that a certain man, who shall be nameless, had noticed something of the sort and did not dare to be at home while a family feud lasted. An enemy could have bribed one of his wives to put poison in his maize beer.'

'That does not sound pleasant!'

'No, polygamy undoubtedly has its drawbacks!' Mauana agreed. 'I myself have only one wife, but several bed slaves,' he added with an artful look in his eye.

Even though all a man's marriages are considered legal, 595 the first wife retains a privileged position. She will be of the best family and the highest in rank. She is the hostess.

838 One day, when I was standing talking with Mauana, he pointed to a couple walking past and said eagerly:

'You should picture those with your apparatus.'

[832] I photographed the two, who to me appeared very ordinary. The woman had her cheeks and nose painted red. Mauana whispered to me that the woman was not a woman, but that they were two men living together. Later we came across several Indian men who did women's work and wore women's dress. This was not considered really right, but it was looked upon with indulgence. In the early days of discovery gold coins were found on the coast by Santa Marta which depicted 'shameful acts contrary to Nature'. Among the Guajiros' relatives in the West Indies there were chiefs who had whole harems of boys.

684 'We were talking of bride-price and buying women slaves,' said I, to revert to more normal things. 'What does a poor youth do, who possesses nothing?'

[833] Everyone agreed that it was a pity about any such. The law had definite regulations for intercourse between man and woman, and any infringement involved a claim for damages. If anyone seduced a woman, he must pay considerable compensation to her relatives, however willing she may have been; but if he took her against her will, it costs him considerably more. A poor man cannot pay and therefore risks losing his life as a punishment. The Indians admitted that here and there on the border there was prosti-[548]tution, but it was mostly mestizo women who lent themselves to that. In Guajira proper, there were no prostitutes. Both the chiefs and the monks told us that. Thus in the interior, a young man without means must live a life of abstinence. The time when the dances of the kid were performed would be his only opportunity of enjoying a [786] woman's favours, provided he could find a willing partner. At this time the otherwise strict code is suspended and free love permitted.

796 Mauana had promised to arrange a dance, but of another kind. The dances of the kid are performed during the rainy

season, and it was then the dry season. The dance was the 796
so-called chichimaya. This was arranged because Mauana
had dreamed that he ought to spend several cattle and lots [787]
of maize beer on a performance of this kind. Otherwise dances are arranged in connection with a girl's being confined in her hut and on a number of other similar occasions. The medicine man, piache, often orders a dance when someone has fallen ill, when a casimba has run dry or when they want rain. They also dance when the herds are marked and castrated. Neighbours and relatives are invited to bring their young girls and these need never lack for partners, for the young men come of themselves, when they hear of it. It is not impolite to ask about the refreshments to be provided before accepting an invitation. The Indians prefer beef to goat's meat, and a beef-dance will be very well attended.

We reached Mauana's house a little too early. The maize 273
beer was not quite ready. Maize beer, or chicha as it is now 796
generally called by the Creoles, is simply a gruel made of ground maize, and it constitutes the Indians' daily fare, as it does in much of native South America. If this gruel is allowed to ferment, it becomes slightly alcoholic and the Guajiro then call it *ujor*. Fermentation is traditionally stimulated by the women chewing the maize, and this also is done in Guajira. The maize is sometimes mixed with manioc. The resultant brew, *ishiruma*, the Indians consider pleasant and strengthening. The ordinary, slightly sour unchewed maize gruel appeals more to the European both as regards taste and hygiene.

Mauana had intended to regale us with spirits, but fortunately we managed to persuade him to give ordinary maize gruel instead.

Gradually people began to assemble, all in their finery. 796
Mauana explained that it was only a small performance. He really did not have time for such things just then, but the promptings of dreams had to be followed.

In the dusk we all went down to the feast-place outside a couple of huts, where an area had been well swept. Round this the guests had now begun to assemble. They stood in a

796 great ring and several of them were wiping their mouths in evident satisfaction—presumably having just been regaled with some drink.

796 535 The drum thundered a long time in vain before a young Indian stepped into the ring, removed his cloak and sandals and began to walk round in a circle—a challenge to the members of the fair sex.

Almost at once a girl appeared in the ring; removed her sandals and held her tunic spread wide with her hands. The two then began dancing: he in front, she a few yards behind. Suddenly the man gave a shout and the tempo increased. Turning swiftly the girl came sweeping down towards the man who danced away, moving backwards. She must try to get close enough to tramp on his feet and make him fall, but she must not barge him. If she managed to make her partner fall, there was great jubilation, and then a new couple took the stage. Otherwise, the girl would probably challenge her partner to a few more turns, while he answered contemptuously:

'Fetch your little sister.' (Inferring that she would manage better.)

In this way a dance continues without interruption, couple following couple. It could go on for weeks.

The well-bred Indian considers the chichamaya the only suitable dance. The monks also approved of it, since it was perfectly decent, the two dancers remaining apart the whole [177] time. The dance is not genuinely Indian, containing both Spanish and African features, but even in its present form it retains its religious-magical significance and is part of the ritual used in certain family ceremonies and on other important occasions.

796 786 The dance of the kid is a pure folk dance. It is really a whole complex of games, dances and typical fertility rites. The good families do not allow their daughters to attend them. The law's strict sexual prohibition does not apply to those taking part in the dance of the kid, who enjoy an otherwise forbidden erotic licence. This is not approved of [585 184] by the well-to-do, who still hold by the rule that a bride should be a virgin, since it can have an effect on the bride-price.

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price. Thus the well-to-do send slaves or servants to the dances.

These dances also have a practical significance. They take place at the start of the rains when vegetation shoots up and help is needed in keeping weeds under. Those taking part in the dance must weed their host's ground during the day, as a return for their food and the dancing at night. They have to do something during the feast which lasts for weeks at a time. Naturally holding such a dance-feast is a costly business, but as a compensation the giver has work done for him. Therefore the feast moves from rancho to rancho, while there is work to be done. [474]

Actually all the dancers ought to be at home working during this time, for all plantations will become overgrown if they are neglected, but the young people are tempted by the feast, the dancing and love-making, and the opportunity to get free of the bonds of strict convention for a time. The fertility of the crops is promoted by different erotic performances, although the Indians no longer seem fully aware that this is their significance. These are typical magical fertility rites.

The actual dance of the kid is performed in different ways. [535] Sometimes the couples are in lines one behind the other, the men holding the girl in front round the waist. First they all dance forwards, and then they turn. At each turn they change partners, the men singing: 'Lend me your partner for my travelling companion.' Another way of performing the dance is very like a long-dance in Sweden. Each group of dancers is led by a singer who always improvises his song, so that the words are always new.

The dance begins at sunset and continues for several hours, after which the dancers all make off into the darkness, two by two, and spend the night with each other. Usually, [833] a couple will stick together throughout the feast. Intercourse must be of the girl's own free will, but involves the man in no obligations, neither compensation for her lost virginity nor damages if a child should result. This is recognized by the girl's family, because it is a result of the freedom allowed during the dance of the kid. If, after the feast, a man wishes

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A Guajiro man, dressed and painted as a woman. He lived with another man and performed all the tasks of the housewife

Little girl with gold beads round her neck and ankles

After-burial: woman weeping by the urn containing the dead man's bones

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[facing p. 112]

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to marry his partner, he must pay for her in the normal way. Otherwise the young men and girls just give each other mementoes.

One of the games forming part of the dance of the kid is the so-called virginity test. The girls gather round a singer who improvises a variation of the theme: 'Let us see, pretty maid, if you have kept your innocence, if any man's hands have touched your body.' He then runs his hands over each girl in turn from the tip of her big toe, over her leg, knee, crotch, belly, chest and neck to the crown of her head, all the while trying to tickle her. Whoever neither laughs nor moves is declared a virgin and lauded by the singer. She goes and stands on one side, while those who cannot keep from laughing and so are not virgins, go to the other. Afterwards pretence presents are given to the 'virgins'.

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When young people are gathered together as during the dance of the kid festival, all sorts of dance-games and pantomimes are performed. Some are connected with fertility rites, as those imitating the mating-play of turtles and goats. In the latter, the girl 'goats' are enclosed in a ring of men who try to prevent the male 'goats' from getting inside it. If any of the youths manage to leap in, they behave exactly like billy goats, pursuing the 'nannies', nosing at them and pretending to mount them. A number of the games have no erotic connection, but refer to all sorts of events in the lives of men and animals. Animals are imitated most faithfully.

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One of the games depicts a meeting between the lowlanders and highlanders of Guajira. Each of the two sides has a singing leader. They exchange greetings and then each describes the situation in their homes: in the one plenty of rain, good harvests, plenty to eat and fat cattle; in the other drought, starvation and misery.

[423]
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Those who are lucky with their climate then invite the others to their territory, and they all dance off in the same direction. The game is a reference to the fact that the lowlanders have the right against payment to send their herds to upper Guajira at certain times of the year to graze.

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The medicine men liked to have a good drink before a seance

A piache, or wise woman, curing a boy by burning him with a red-hot arrow head

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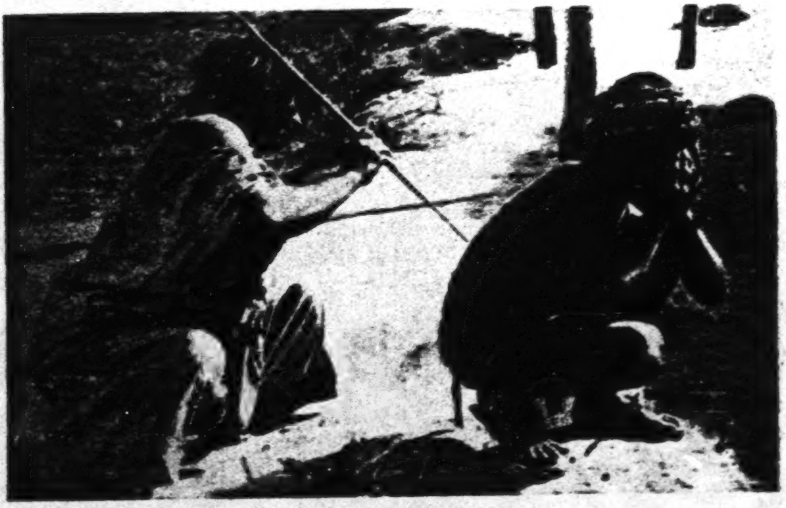

[facing p. 113]

In another game the dangerous spirit Yoruyá attacks 796
and kills Indian after Indian till he is set upon by them all 526
and killed; in yet another the Indians hide in a cloud made
of cloaks, when the spirit forces its way in, but it is captured [776]
by the cloud and vanquished.

Horse-racing is one of the Indians' greatest pleasures at [541]
their festivities, but they also indulge in it—without horses—as a game in connection with the dances. Very amusing and picturesque is a game in which they imitate hunting a kind of bird that plunders the seed in their fields. The Indians pretend to be trying to scare them and catch them in nets. Here the seed is represented by some children, some of the men are the birds, others the hunters who catch the birds in their hammocks and then wring their necks!

Another game represents a fight between jaguars and dogs. The strongest of the men are made the jaguars, for these have to win. Then there is a snake game in which men and women crawl along together, imitating the movements of a snake and singing the snake song: 'I am the snake. I creep along the ground. I do harm to none, but punish those who try to trample me. Long must he suffer, who tramps upon me because he thinks me defenceless since I creep on the ground. He must suffer and die.' There are endless variations; but a dance lasts so long that a little variety is necessary.

Once the upper-class dance, the chichamaya, was over, [565]
Mauana's people gladly showed us all their games and dances even though it was not the right time of year.

As we were riding home the next day we encountered 115
several companies of Indians returning from a burial-feast. Among them was a young man in a beautifully woven mantle, who joined up with us. He spoke good Spanish and obviously belonged to the upper class. Francisco told him about us, and he was eager that we should be his guests that same day, since his rancho lay on our route. He said that he had a few things that I might well find interesting and he himself would like to see one of my pistols. (Francisco had evidently described how they smoked and made 273
a bang.) Some of the Indians accompanying us now became

273 quarrelsome, the parting drink of spirits having had its effect. One old man after much swaying in the saddle was finally thrown off by his jibbing mule. He landed in a prickly bush and became frantic. He wanted to see blood. Luckily his weapons were on his saddle, but he managed to remove one of his spurs and began stabbing with it at those who were trying to help him up. Francisco received a jab, but he and a couple of others managed to overpower the old ruffian, whom they bound and tied to his saddle. Then his wife led him and his mount away.

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574 One by one the groups went off in their various directions. We came to the rancho of the young Indian, our new [361] friend. He had several big huts, built on the sand, where there was no greenery or shade. He explained that when the rains came, it did not become swampy there, as in most other places, but the water ran through the sand and you could [286] walk dry-shod. There were looms in several of the open huts. At one sat our host's young, light-complexioned wife, [832] who undoubtedly was a great beauty by Guajiro standards, and in another his aged mother with a wrinkled clever face.

We were offered goat's milk as a refreshment. I was [272] always amazed at the care with which these Indians collected the small quantities of milk the goats yielded, for each gave a mere squirt. We took a gulp of goat's milk in order to avoid having to drink spirits.

The women were in a great bustle, evidently getting a spread ready. The Guajiro are hospitable, and when strangers or friends come they must have the best the house can provide. If need be, the host gives up his own hammock and lies on the ground.

Our host had plenty of hammocks. After resting a while,
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778 my wife went inside to look at the weaving, while I produced one of the pistols I had bought at an auction and demonstrated it, shooting a couple of shots, the noise and smoke of which appeared highly satisfactory to our host. Hastily he drew me aside and whispered that he had something that ought to interest me. He had *tuma* and was willing to part with this precious, sought-after article in exchange for my noisy pistol. After all I had a companion without a

wife and he perhaps could do with it. I knew what unu was, 439
but had never expected to be offered a secret magical object 778
by an Indian who scarcely knew me.

Unu was one of the many *cóntra* or instruments of magic 778
used by the Indians either to protect or help the possessor. [751
Unu stimulated love. The Guajiro have not only their old 832]
Indian magic, but some of Spanish–Moorish and African
negro origin. Where these cóntra are concerned, it would be
most interesting, though difficult, to find out which were
of red, black or white origin. They differ in character, but
one and all can be lent or hired to a person of the same sex
and can be used by that person with as much effect as when
used by the owner himself.

A unu love magic was most difficult and expensive to 778
acquire. The equivalent of £30 or £40 was the current price, 832
while the owner will normally charge £10 or £15 if he [435]
hires it out. A cóntra must not be shown to any unauthorized
person, as its power may then transfer itself to
the person who happens to see it.

Love talismans were of different kinds. That considered to be of the best quality was a tiny pouch containing small pieces of what looked like the droppings of some sort of lizard. The magic stuffs of Guajira often imitate the excrement of various animals. Others consist of little stones in a glass bottle, or a decoction of herbs, which the person on whom the magic is to be worked has to take or wash in. One powerful and unfailing love specific is the hair clippings of the confined majayura girl, mixed with the blood of humming birds and other ingredients, but that can only be used on the girl in question. With her, however, it cannot fail.

The love magic the young Indian now said he would give me was one of those little pouches, thus very precious. He was willing to let it go because he liked my pistol so much. He had no further need of a love specific now that he had got himself a beautiful wife with its help—and, he might have added, thanks to a good supply of cattle. And if he ever wanted another cóntra, well, he knew where to get one. But he would not get any more wives. He was a

778 832 Christian now and intended to have done with such things, and the Father had said that it was better to turn to a saint. And, of course, I was asked to say nothing about the transaction—that was always done in such cases.

I, of course, was keen to do business.

[784] 'But remember now not to eat roast meat or maize, nothing that has been in direct contact with fire. Otherwise you may fare badly.'

One has to observe certain rules of diet and behaviour when using a cóntra, but not so long as it lies idle.

The little pouch with the love specific thus passed into my possession, and I gave it our photographer to keep in the pocket of his camera case, as I had done with other small objects.

After we returned to the mission I told Francisco of my acquisition. He did not seem at all surprised, so evidently he and the young Indian had been in touch before the offer was made. I also told Francisco that Gladtvet was looking after the talisman, and he nodded understandingly. Gladtvet had no wife with him and no doubt would like to captivate a nice young girl, if one came his way.

574 778 832 [567] Our host, whom Francisco told [illegible] would one day be a chief, asked us to stay the night. He was of course prepared to place a slave at the disposal of the solitary white man as hospitality required, but, he added, the prettiest girl in the house was a debtor-slave, whom he could not order, so the white man would have to charm her, if he wished to have her. It would be a good opportunity to try the talisman I had just acquired. Francisco said afterwards that it would not have been a reliable test of the talisman's efficacy, since undoubtedly the girl would have been very easily conquered by a large silver coin. Altogether, he considered, it would have been more practical for me to have bought a slave for Gladtvet than that expensive love charm, since, as he pointed out, slaves were cheap now, at the height of the dry season, owing to the shortage of food.

It was no use trying to explain to Francisco that this magic talisman, like all the other things I had bought from the Indians, was to go into a museum. He would merely

have got the impression that I intended to keep it in a safe 574
place in order to exploit it commercially, that is to say, hire 778
it out to applicants. He could never have understood what 832
a museum was.

We declined our host's invitation as politely as we could. Gladtvet's interest in his female slaves—who now had their faces painted black into the bargain—was very lukewarm.

We were served a dish of goat's meat, from a goat that 264
our friend had been given at the funeral. Unfortunately it 574
was old and tough, and my wife had to leave almost her entire helping. That was not regarded impolite in Guajira. On the contrary our hostess looked delighted and hastily removing it and herself to a very short distance, set about engulfing it. One might have thought that she did not get enough to eat, but no Guajiro wife was underfed in a well-to-do household. Often they had more food than they wanted. Why, then, did she not leave the helping for her
slaves? Because she wanted what had been left by the [789]
lightest-complexioned woman she had ever seen, since one can become fairer oneself by eating what such a being has touched. For that reason, my wife, as a gesture of politeness, often left some of her food when we ate in Indian houses, to the delight of the women of the household. What I left would have been of use only to the medicine man, and that because I was a learned man.

On our return to the mission, the monks gave us a large 778
piece of beef, which we grilled. 832

'Ay, ay,' said Francisco after the feast, 'the photographer señor should not have eaten grilled meat. I forgot his cóntra.'

'His cóntra?'

'Yes, he has the cóntra now. He ought to have eaten something else. What will happen now?'

The next day Gladtvet had a pain in his stomach and Francisco became frightened. Francisco had been brought up at the mission and considered himself a good Catholic, but that did not prevent him believing in magic. However, our medicine chest relieved Gladtvet's pains more easily than Francisco expected.

778 832 Francisco and I had several talks about the love cóntra. He pointed out that it was important for the man or woman wishing to use such a talisman to powder certain parts of his or her body with red schiste powder. He gave me detailed instructions which I wrote down, as Francisco thought, in order to instruct Gladtvet, so that he should be ready, if he discovered a suitable object.

The women have love charms as well as the men. With a really effective one a woman can make sure of her husband's love for ever, or win back the love she has lost. When she intends to use such means, she must keep indoors and diet
784 for four days and nights, not expose herself to the sun nor see another woman's face, and she must avoid all milk and anything roasted. She must bath indoors and powder herself. There is a talisman which the wise women of the Jararà Hills manufacture, a stuff of herbs wrapped in a piece of cloth, which prevents a husband from taking another woman.

779 832 784 Sometimes a woman will make a man fall in love with her as an act of revenge. To do this she must get hold of one of his old sandals or something he has worn. This she burns and resultant cóntra is introduced into the man's clothes or belongings. This often ends in the man becoming mad. A man can also avenge himself by making a girl fall in love with him, if he can manage to get some of her hair clippings. For that reason women hide these most carefully all their lives.

778 832 An Indian, when greatly attracted by a girl, will often make the greatest sacrifices and undergo all sorts of difficulties to get her. Having succeeded, he will often go off quite soon with his herds to some other part of the peninsula. After that he is not heard of again, and his wife is left to support herself as best she can. That shows that she had attracted him by means of a cóntra which had been very effective, but that she had then been incautious enough to let it go from her, or it may have lost its power.

There are cóntras for other things than love, e.g., for luck in hunting and in war, to acquire wealth and reputation and to protect oneself against certain spirts or dangers.

On two occasions I went out with some hunters who had 778
hunting cóntras. Two had talismans for hares; these were 224
small pellets fastened to the leather shield that protects the 789
arm against the bow string. The pellets were shaped like
rabbit's excrement and contained a herb the leaves of which
resembled rabbit's ears and which the so-called rabbits
were fond of! Another man had a deer cóntra prepared
from a creeper. It resembled deer's droppings.

The hunters were quite convinced that the cóntra would
give them good hunting, and that by its power their game
would be unable to escape them. Thus those cóntra were
doubly effective. On neither occasion, however, did we get
anything, much to the consternation of the hunters. I think
they assumed that my presence had prevented the charms
working, and they were astounded when I bought them.

Of other talismans there was one intended to help its 778
owner win races. This consisted of some rattling fruits to 789
tie beside the horse's ear. There was a cóntra for warriors
called *rania*, which gave its bearer courage and made him
invulnerable. Another, which was very expensive, was said
to give the possessor luck in business and gradually make
him rich. Having become rich, he could then purchase the
most expensive charm of all, that which would bring him
respect and power. This latter was strictly personal: an
outsider could be harmed by seeing it, especially a thief, and
it was not effective except in the hands of its rightful
owner. It was contained inside several small bags, one
within the other, and what was inside the inmost one was
known only to the piache who prepared it. In the talisman
that brought wealth there were supposed to be links of gold,
the power of which lay in the spells spoken over them.
Similarly pearls and little figures made of coconut over
which the wise women had spoken spells served as amulets.
Amongst other things they protect the wearer against the 754
evil eye, belief in which the Indians had evidently adopted 177
from the Spanish-Moorish superstitions of their conquerors. 532
You can find too the small carved hands that are so typically
Moorish, and the most powerful means of averting the evil
eye. Yet another is more in the negro style. The skulls of

The skuls of
778 horses are placed round dwelling-places to repulse spirits,
789 which are held to be very afraid of horses, whether alive or
776 dead. When a caravan travels by night, the men with horses
825 are in the lead, and the spirits flee at once. Once long ago the Indians themselves had an almost superstitious dread of horses; that was when for the first time they saw them used by their white conquerors.

It was said that some piaches had in their possession gold statuettes inherited from the 'ancients'. If that was so, they were presumably pre-Columbian objects found in some grave or kept for centuries by some succession of medicine men.

CHAPTER 9

A Wake

764 ONE day we received an invitation to a rancho owned by well-to-do people. We knew them, but had not been there before. The messenger bade us welcome and told us that the old man there had gone. Francisco crossed himself and said that an old man, an uncle, had died and that there was to be a funeral feast. What the dead man's name was could not be mentioned. We wanted to witness a burial, so we accepted gratefully and set off at once with camera and guns—Francisco having told us that one fired off guns at the feast.

There were a lot of people already there when we arrived. 763
Members of the family were often informed when illness
took a dangerous turn and so arrived while the patient was
still alive. On this occcasion they had already laid the dead
man out. He had been washed: his best ornaments had been
put on him and he had been wrapped in the cloths which
the women weave specially for this purpose. After death a
woman is painted to make her as lovely as possible, but
not a man. The dead person is always left alone for a while, 775
so that his soul can go round a last time and take farewell
of the place. Having been shrouded, the old man had been
laid in the fresh hide of a newly slaughtered bullock and
placed in a hammock strung between two poles under a
temporary roof covered with grass.

Numbers of people were standing round the dead man's last resting place, while his closest relatives sat in hammocks strung between other poles. All kept their faces covered, either by pulling their cloaks up over them or by draping clothes over their heads. Some were merely clasping their

764 hands to their faces. From one and all rose the lugubrious, shrill lament that had to sound uninterruptedly as long as the dead man was above ground. (For some time after the [765] funeral, the man's nearest relatives would begin the day with a song of lament.) After some time the wailers nearest to the bier began to make way for others, and then we too [576] began lamenting, imitating the sound as best we could, as politeness required that every guest should.

One of the men now turned and pulled the cloak from his face. It was our host. He was very glad to see us and, above all, seemed to be flattered that my wife had come. He was [273] already slightly under the weather, swaying a little on his [415] feet, and in one hand he held an enamel chamberpot. He looked so comical that my wife had to hold her handkerchief over her mouth so that none should see what difficulty she was having in keeping a straight face. Our host thought she [431] was very moved and at once ordered one of his fattest sheep [609] to be given her to 'dry her tears', as it is called. He always called her *majayura*, maiden, remarking: 'She is far too young and lovely to be married.' This, of course, was meant as a compliment. He added that he knew very well what we usually ate. He knew that we were from the same part of the world as the monks and that these people lived on bread, sugar and potatoes. He had tasted them in Nazaret. But perhaps we also liked meat? We assured him that we did, and he promised us large pieces of beef and as much maize beer as we wished. Then he had to go and attend to his other guests.

Burials are big affairs. A good proportion of the dead person's livestock has to be slaughtered to accompany him into the hereafter. The guests feast on this meat, and afterwards each is given some to take home. We walked round to look at the many camps, some under cactus trees, others in the open. There were several hundred Indians assembled [262] there. Everywhere sheep were being slaughtered, meat was being roasted and people were feasting. One old woman was stuffing congealed blood from a calabash with both hands. The whole place smelt of blood, maize beer and spirits. Here and there someone was galloping on a horse. Many of

the men were already quite drunk. Everyone was chattering, 764
laughing and enjoying themselves. It was more like a fair than a funeral. The sun was in the zenith and there was no shade anywhere. Most of the men had removed their cloaks, only putting them on to go to the bier and lament; but the women kept their tunics on; there were no half-naked women to be seen there. Some of them had tunics of light bought material, and when the wind pressed the cloth against their bodies their forms stood out like reliefs and [832]
their skins shone through the thin material. Many of the men devoured them with their eyes, but the women's interest seemed riveted to the steaming boiled meat.

We met a thin and obviously poor Indian who expressed satisfaction at the number of funerals that had lately taken place. He had been attending them uninterruptedly for almost a month, had had meat every day and was beginning to put on weight. Yet he was not high in the social scale. Each person was entertained in accordance with his social [594]
rank.

There was not much sleep that night. Lamentation continued beside the bier all night, while sounds of singing, shouts and squabbling came from the Indian camp. We had been told that it would be a day or two before the dead man was buried. That is not done until all the cattle allotted for the funeral have been slaughtered. A number of beasts had been set aside to provide the meat the guests took away with them, and others were being saved for the subsequent funeral. We knew that in two years' time the dead man's bones would be dug up and another feast held.

In that climate a body should not remain above ground even two days, and yet the funerals of the rich lasted much longer. Thus they swathe the bodies of the rich in as many pieces of cloth as possible and in several cow-hides in an attempt to keep the stench from being too offensive. There 766
was a lot of talk about the funeral of a rich chief, José Dolores, that had taken place some years before. How many cattle were slaughtered on that occasion is not known for certain—the monks said about three thousand—but it is known that the feast lasted two and a half months. The body

766 was wrapped in forty-eight beautifully woven cloaks each worth the equivalent of £20-£25. Despite this the atmosphere was not pleasant and during the feast they sent to Venezuela for so much eau de cologne that it was said to have cost thirty thousand bolivares. What we were attending was thus quite a simple funeral, but it must have cost several hundred pounds.

764 On the third day the body, wrapped in hides, was placed on a horse and taken out to the burial place, where one of [554] the closest male relatives had dug a grave—a great honour that. Everyone accompanied the body. The men drank copiously as they walked along. The dead man was laid in the grave, and some of the sand that had been dug out of it was carefully shovelled in; then they let down food and drink, including a large jar of spirits, and—to our amazement—the enamel pot followed. Indians who have had a lot to do with white people like to take such pots on their journeys, and apparently it was considered that one might be needed even on a man's last journey.

After this everyone fired their guns into the air, and those [775] who did not have firearms shot arrows. That was done in the hope of driving away any malevolent spirits who might be trying to worm their way back. A large fire was lit on the grave. This would burn every night for some time to come, in order to light the soul on its journey.

765 Later, the dead man's relatives would go out now and again to lament and take food and drink, which latter they would invite the dead man to share with them. Then, after a couple of years, the man's bones would be dug up and the after-funeral celebrated. We attended several of these; 765 this second ceremony is entrusted to a few female relatives, 767 who, swathed in tunics from head to foot, take hold of the bones with bits of cloth. The skull and skeleton are cleaned and laid on a cloth, in which they are tied up and lowered into a jar and this is taken to the house of grief, where another, though shorter funeral feast is held. After that the jar is buried again.

767 Those who have dug up the bones and all who have touched a dead person, must not eat with their hands for

several days afterwards, but have to be fed. They also have 767
to keep to a diet for a while, a precaution that, like the
cloaks they are wrapped in while digging up the bones, is to
protect them against spirits.

In the old days the house in which a person died was 768
abandoned. Nowadays that is only done if the person has
been murdered.

I have come across this after-funeral among several 765
Indian tribes farther south, in particular the Motilon in the 171
Andes, neighbours of the Guajiro, and the Indians of the
Llanos plains around the Orinoco. It seems a peculiar
custom to us, but it is a sort of memorial ceremony, a feast
of remembrance devoted to the dead person, who is thus not
forgotten so quickly by the Indians, as is often the case with
us.

The animals killed at a man's funeral are to accompany 764
him into the hereafter and enable him to maintain his position there. His immediate relatives must not eat of this meat,
which is all given to the guests, who cook it and feast on it.

Different in character is the sacrifice of some creature, a [751]
black sheep or a brown cow, which the piache recommends [782]
when he has dreamed that someone is in danger of being
murdered. Here the animal is being killed in place of the [787]
threatened man, the goat or cow acting as substitute so that
the human can escape his fate. Presumably, what used to
happen was that the person threatened had to go out and
kill some wild animal, a deer for example. The custom of
slaughtering cattle at a funeral originates from the change in [178]
the Indians' way of life that resulted from their making
cattle-rearing their main occupation. Earlier the dead person
was given other grave-goods to enable him to manage in
the life hereafter, including ornaments and that sort of
thing. In the pre-Columbian era quantities of polished stone
beads and tuma were placed in the graves. Then, when fortunes began to be reckoned in cattle and horses, it was
obvious that the dead person must have cattle to accompany
him. To the Guajiro, as to the general run of Indians, there 761
is no such thing as natural death. Were it not for the 776
dangerous world of the spirits and evil enchanters people

761 would be able to live to all intents and purposes for ever.
776 The Guajiro word for illness, *wanuru*, is the same as that for
the spirit of death, and actually means 'he within us'. As so
often happens, they make no distinction between the spirits
of the dead and other spirits.

775 The spirits of suicides are especially feared. As a safety
measure the rope and tree used are burned, since death still
762 clings to them and is infectious. Round the scene of the
suicide the dead man's ghost wanders head down, sometimes pursuing passers-by in the shape of a flame. Everybody avoids such places. It sometimes happens that Indians, both children and grown-ups, say that they have met dead relatives in human guise, but dumb. Such encounters bring misfortune. If a Guajiro Indian moves outside the peninsula, he will after death rest on the burial place of his fathers. After death he has a long journey ahead of him, and if he is to reach the realm of the dead he ought to start out from the burial place of his own people. Besides, and this perhaps is the most important point of all, the ritual prescribed in Guajira has to be observed.

775 The spirit of a murdered person follows his slayer every-
where and attacks him if he falls ill or becomes weak, appear-
682 ing in the hallucinations of fever. Its presence also constitutes a danger to the murderer's children. It can also appear in the form of a flame or of an animal, for example a bird. As I have already said, the house in which someone has been murdered is abandoned immediately, for the angry spirit of the dead man can appear there at any time.

To protect himself the slayer must submit to severe restrictions, which are prescribed by his maternal aunts and the elder women and which he follows in his own interest. He hides in the wilds, has nothing but maize gruel and water. He ought not to speak or have anything to do with anyone, and must be ever ready with weapons in his hand. An enemy may appear. The slayer cuts off his hair, wears a very short black cloak and must sleep on the ground with his face downwards and hidden, never on his back, otherwise the spirit of the man he killed could sit on his chest. It is best if he can sleep little and seldom, and have a dog with

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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A professional mourner

Below: *The daily butchering*

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[Facing p. 128]

him that can give the alarm. For a long time he has to refrain 775
from all association with his friends and keep away from
feasts. In the end, if agreement on compensation is not 682
reached with the dead man's family, he will have to leave
the district for a period of years. This precaution is to
protect the slayer from the spirit of the man he killed, which
would look for him in his normal haunts and would not
recognize him under the new conditions, but it is also a
protection against the dead man's nearest relatives, who will
thirst for vengeance as long as compensation has not been
agreed and paid.

We mounted and rode away from our first burial feast. 775
On the fringe of the area stood six Indians armed, some with 765
guns, others with bows and arrows. Their task was to shoot
after all departing guests in order to scare off any dangerous 431
spirits that might be intending to keep them company. Here,
a deputy-host presented us with a live heifer. Every guest [554]
was to have a present of an animal according to his rank.
We also had the meat that had been distributed that morning.
It was considered quite all right either to eat it or to
take it to eat on the way home. Several others were doing
as we and there was a long line of departing guests, the men [492]
on horseback, the women mostly on donkeys. We all kept
together for quite a distance.

Spirits rose as the heat increased, for drink had been 765
handed out along with the meat, the Indians believing, as 565
did the Creoles, that spirits were the best protection against
the dangers of the hot sun.

A young Indian rode up to us. He wore a cloak with a
beautiful pattern and was mounted on a splendid mare,
which showed that he was of well-to-do family. He was in a
bad mood, however, having been forgotten in the distribution [578]
of parting gifts and had not been given even a sheep.
For that reason he was highly incensed with his neglectful
hosts, whom he obviously scarcely knew.

We rode past an old man on foot dragging a calf behind
him. The old man was obviously sober, but he kept muttering [578]
imprecations to himself. He too had been forgotten.

765 565 The old man, however, was familiar with the customs of olden days and had taken what they had forgotten to give him, calculating generously in his own favour. Strictly he was entitled to no more than a kid, if that, poor relation that he was; but he had appropriated one of his host's calves.

Our young Indian friend thought this an excellent idea, and as we happened to be riding past a herd of goats belonging to the house of mourning, he asked me to lend him my shot-gun, dismounted and shot two goats, which he then lashed on to his pack-animal. He paid no attention to the protests of the slave guarding the herd, who of course did not dare do anything to anyone so well dressed and so obviously a person of rank. He gruffly told the slave that he had the law on his side. This put the young Indian in a better humour, and he took a smiling leave of us.

765 574 We were invited to several other funeral feasts while we were in Guajira. Both the actual burial and the after-funeral were in the same style. Often they were quite gay affairs—especially the repeat performance, when the grief was not so intense even with the immediate relatives. Often fights resulted. On the way home from Mauana's dance we had met people on their way back from a funeral who were quarrelsome. It sometimes happens that a person attending a funeral is killed. He is then taken home and most of the guests accompany him to continue celebrating in that new house of sorrow.

The funeral ritual is observed strictly and in detail. Children must learn it early and therefore are allowed to go to such feasts.

On the more important events the medicine man gives advice and directions, so let us now turn to him.

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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Warrior with poisoned arrows

Below: *A chief's mother surrounded by female slaves*

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[Facing p. 129]

CHAPTER 10

Conjuration of Spirits

How does one become a piache? Not of one's own 756
volition. Those worthy are chosen by the spirits and 767
receive their summons in a supernatural way. The wanuru
spirit itself visits the chosen one, who may be a boy or a girl. 276
Women are often sorcerers in Guajira. One of them gave
us this account of how she received her summons.

First she saw in front of her eyes a fall of shooting-stars, a rain of gold; then everything went dark and she sank to the ground. The first warning usually comes like that. Some days later she had violent attacks of shivering, cold sweats and vomiting. As she lay in her hammock more dead than alive, she heard a voice say: 'Eat manilla or you will die.' (Manilla is a kind of chewing tobacco which the Indians now obtain from white traders, but in default they have recourse to tobacco leaves. The spirit always orders the person to chew manilla.)

The woman's relations hastened to get some manilla and at the same time sent for a piache, who would have to decide whether the girl really had received a call or not.

Another woman told us that her first symptom was thoroughly prosaic: constipation. During the night she dreamed that the spirit came and led her by the hand to a big plantation. She awoke trembling, but then heard a voice ordering her to eat manilla. By chewing tobacco she recovered completely. Her mother, who was herself a piache, at once began instructing her in her profession.

After the summons comes the apprenticeship. The magical tobacco seems of great significance for the medicine man or woman to be, and even for the fully trained. The

756 medicine men of South America make great use of tobacco,
787 and at first it was mostly reserved for them. The chewing of
tobacco can cause an intoxication, through which a magi-
276 cian can put himself into a state of ecstasy. Of course, the nicotine has a violent effect on the children whom the spirit orders to eat manilla, and it is not easy to say whether the symptoms accompanying the summons are due to abuse of tobacco or to other infirmity. It is said that those called to be piache always fall ill. The Indians are fully convinced that dreams have significance for their actions. While asleep they receive instructions which they seldom dare fail to carry out. The youth or girl who is summoned receives his or her revelation either in dreams or while in a hysterical state. The Indians consider them to be possessed by the spirit, and the piache for whom they send then has to decide whether the spirit really has visited the boy or girl, or not. If it is not possible to fetch a piache immediately, they will sometimes have to make do with a sooth-sayer, an *outschi*, who though not a proper medicine man, at least can 'smoke tobacco', that is to say, can foretell future happenings, find strayed animals, etc. They are often well patronized. The outschi swings a firebrand in the air while puffing at a cigar—magical tobacco again!—and the trails of smoke tell him what he wishes to know. He can merely confirm that there has been a true revelation, that the spirit visited the young person and entered into him or her. A sooth-sayer can go no further than that, but that gives the parents the comforting assurance that the piache, who has to be summoned in any event, will not come in vain. The piache has no objection to a sooth-sayer making a diagnosis.

The attacks from which the candidate suffers both at his selection and when he becomes fully qualified, lead to a
766 trancelike state. It is characteristic that a dead piache may not be buried until after three days and nights, so that it is quite certain that he is dead and not just that his soul happens to be away. A cataleptic state and hallucinations are characteristic of future and practising medicine men alike.

There is no avoiding the call to be a piache once it has

been confirmed by sooth-sayer and piache. The person 756
selected must learn the profession and practise it. Otherwise, 787
certain death awaits him, for the spirit will not suffer his
decisions to be neglected. 276

Often parents cannot afford to send for a piache, for
those who convey the request have to give him a necklace
of gold beads. This may mean that the novice's family has [602]
to ask well-to-do relatives to pay the fee. When he arrives, the piache examines the candidate and stuffs some manilla into his or her mouth. When he sees that it is beginning to take effect, he intones a monotonous song. As soon as he stops, the novice must proclaim his desire to become a piache and have it granted. He is selected by the spirit, but he does not yet know anything. The apprenticeship then begins.

The piache shuts himself into a suitable hut together with 756
the novice, and there they must stay, hidden from the world, for a month or more. The apprentice is not supposed to be seen by anyone during this time. No one may go in and
interrupt the seance. The piache sits on his stool of light [352]
wood shaped like an animal. He wears a head-dress made of wool and places a similar one on the novice's head. He then begins singing songs, swinging rattles and making all the gestures, movements and conjurations that he uses to call upon and move the spirits. His instruction continues day
after day, sometimes by night as well. He has to keep to a [262]
certain diet. Roast maize in particular is usually prescribed. Now and again spirits appear and talk with the novice, encouraging him, not least by expounding how great are the advantages of being a piache, and how rich the presents he receives.

One day the spirit announces that the first period of instruction is over and the novice ready for examination. This is an intermediary examination, for the instruction is not complete. So far it has only included spells and magical songs, and the novice has no knowledge of herbs and
poisons. (Knowledge of medicinal herbs is common to all [824]
by family tradition.) The songs, gestures and spells have been repeated till the novice knows them all perfectly.

756 During this period of confinement the novice is always having to chew tobacco, and it is during periods of nicotine-
[776] intoxication that the spirits appear to him. After his first examination the novice is given a diadem and a rattle, *maraca*, as symbols of his new dignity.

The novice's family must now arrange a dance and sacri-
[535] fice sheep or goats. A chichamaya is performed during one or two days and nights. Those taking part are ceremoniously painted. The animals are slaughtered and offered to the spirits who partake of them during the night. After that the dancers can eat. No one, however, may touch the meat till
[782] it has lain, wrapped in leaves, at the spirits' disposition and thereafter been dedicated by the piache, who spits tobacco juice upon it and pronounces spells over it.

The apprenticeship, of course, is not over, and again the novice is shut away from the world. Now comes a period of instruction in the art of chewing tobacco, that is to say, how, where and when that is to be done and what are correct ways to summon spirits, cure illness, make rain, protect cattle, halt epidemics and much more that the medicine man may be called upon to do. The instructing piache transfers his spirit to the apprentice, and exhorts the former not to start by trying to cure adults, but to practise on children. The spirit also forbids erotic association.

After a few months the apprentice will be ready to qualify. Large quantities of maize beer are then prepared and invitations sent out.

756 While the guests are drinking and dancing the novice
787 sits, still isolated, practising. The spirit comes and orders him or her to send for a beast of certain colour and with specific markings, which is to be sacrificed to the spirit. When that has been done, and it must be done, the spirit demands some necklaces of gold beads—any number up to ten—which have to be hung up in the novice's hut. As soon as these have been collected with the help of relatives—often as a loan—the spirit pronounces himself satisfied and informs them that the novice's apprenticeship is over. He or
[533] she can now begin to practise. But, the spirit adds, there

must be no intimate association with women, not even with 756 787 a wife!

The spirit has not merely accepted the novice as a piache, [833] but has entered into him, possessed him and will accompany him during all his magical seances. As a person a piache is of no importance, but when the mighty spirit fills him he becomes the equal of the real spirits. He cures the sick [755] exclusively by supernatural means, with the help of the spirits. Of real medicine he knows nothing. According to the Indians' ideas there are no natural causes of illness [153] and death, which are ascribed entirely to dangerous spirits.

When a piache is summoned to cure a sick person, he must be given a gold necklace or some other valuable gift. He brings with him two maraca rattles, the usual magical instrument of the South American Indians, and a stool shaped like an animal. If necessary, he can sit on some other stool. One of his magical instruments is small pellets made by someone with a great knowledge of herbs and formed like goat's excrement, which are intended to attract the spirits.

While the piache is in his trance everyone must remain silent, otherwise the spirit may take fright and leave the piache's body, at which he will fall to the ground in convulsions and be ill. The piache chews tobacco all the time, and with the resultant magical saliva he smears his patient's body and often the walls and roof of the hut as well. He sings a song, invoking the spirit and sucks the parts of his [755] patient's body that hurt, thereby drawing out the cause of the illness: poisoned spirit arrows that have been shot at the sick person's body.

Usually the piache is alone with his patient, but sometimes he will allow a near relative to be present and help. The songs the piache sings are about how his own spirit is seeking everywhere for the patient's. The demon of the illness has gone off with it and holds it prisoner. When the demon is found, it is forced to release the patient's spirit against a ransom. For this the piache demands cattle, goats or sheep with special markings or ornaments, cloaks, etc.

756 If cattle, these are tethered beside the hut where the
787 seance is being held; if ornaments they are handed to
the piache.

If the piache does not receive what he demands—or rather what the spirit demands—attacks compel him to stop treatment. If the patient recovers, the piache retains the gifts on behalf of the spirit; but if the patient dies, then he is not supposed to get anything. Sometimes, however, he apparently keeps his fee on various pretexts—threats that the spirit might be angry, etc.

The piache observes his patient closely during treatment. An experienced medicine man will perhaps see that the patient has scarcely any hope of recovery and will pronounce him doomed.

During these seances the spirits often speak with the piache about the life to come. They tell him that in another existence he will come to a land with many villages that he
[775] has never seen before, in a countryside well watered by blue
rivers—a glorious prospect from the Guajiro point of view. It seems that the spirits are here speaking of the piaches' special heaven. Ordinary Indians, perhaps, have to be content with a less well-watered paradise. If the patient recovers, the piache orders a chichamaya dance. The maize beer for this is prepared either by chewing or by adding raw sugar,
[534] *panela*. Those taking part stream in as soon as the drum,
the only instrument, begins to sound. Nobody is invited; people just come as they wish. In the houses of the well-to-do they will be regaled with beef, one or more cattle being slaughtered for this. All will be in their finery. The dance will last one day or more, as the piache orders. The piache then washes his patient, who must still keep indoors.

756 When a child falls ill, the parents will often consult some neighbour who dabbles in fortune-telling to find out what the cause is. It will be cheaper to let her try, than at once to call in a professional sooth-sayer or a piache. The old woman will often burn the child with a red-hot needle or arrow-head, which in certain abnormal mental states, perhaps could provide a beneficial shock. The woman will often

accuse an animal of spreading the disease. 756 A certain bird is considered dangerous, spreading, as it flies over the hut, bronchitis and coughs, which in the first place attack the [153] children. A child's illness is often ascribed to something that happened to the mother during pregnancy. If a child gets a pain in its stomach, the wise woman may say that this is because a spirit ate some of the mother's food before the 755 child was born. To deal with this, duck feathers are burned and the child's behind smeared with ash. In other circumstances it is because a fox has nosed at something the mother subsequently ate. In that case a fox has to be killed and the child given some of its grilled meat, at the same time as the child's behind is rubbed with burned fox-bone. The child will get quite better—if the old woman is right and it was a fox. These women are quacks even in the Indians' eyes, and yet they turn to them first.

If an animal is sick, the piache himself is at once sent for. [231] The cattle are driven into an enclosure and the piache dances round and among them, wearing his head-dress, torso bare, and brandishing his maraca, singing song-spells and spitting tobacco juice upon the animals. After some days of this, the treatment is concluded with a chichamaya dance.

The Guajiro, of course, believe in dreams. During sleep 756 the spirit frees itself and learns things of which it knows 787 nothing while the individual is awake. Because of this it is considered risky to neglect warnings or things of which one has dreamed.

A piache attaches special importance to his dream-experiences and knows how to interpret them. If he dreams that a snake bites someone, it means that that person will be struck by a poisoned arrow. If he sees fire in his dream, that indicates fever, while violent rain denotes the death of some rich Indian. Blood in a dream also means death, and an animal being butchered means that a person of the same age or sex will die. If the piache dreams that an enemy intends to kill a specific individual, he hastens to visit the person to help him. An animal of a certain colour is killed and the threatened individual smeared with its blood—

The Goajiro town at Maracaibo

[facing p. 136]

756 787 that prevents his own from being shed—and after this a chichamaya dance is arranged.

791 787 It is not only through dreams that future events can be foretold. There are special sooth-sayers: we have already mentioned the outschi, who deal in prophecy without being piaches. Many real piaches also deal in prognostication, but that is not really their province. The Indians believe in the piache, more than in the ordinary sooth-sayer. 'The piache is always right', they say.

In divination the sooth-sayer also uses a firebrand that he swings through the air, or a lighted cigarette or, sometimes, a knife-edge along which he stares. Whatever the method, the sooth-sayer's spirit has to free itself and go roaming. Let us say that he is to track down a stolen cow. The freed spirit follows its path till it finds it and can say whither it has been taken. As I said, a piache will not treat a patient if he is sure that he is incurable. He often finds out about this by using a firebrand. If it goes out, there is no hope. Sooth-sayers most carefully study the different shapes assumed by the coals, which, to the initiated, are significant.

As with us, there are many amateurs, especially elder women, who try to foretell the future or discover what others are about. Suppose such a woman wants to know where her husband, who is on a journey, is and how he is [276] faring. She takes a cigar of the primitive kind they use there, lights it and pronounces an incantation, asking to be shown what she wishes to know. If the ash turns black, her husband has fallen seriously ill, if the red part splutters it means that he will get gold, that is money. Other signs will reveal that he has associated with some other woman. That can involve the husband in considerable trouble when he returns.

756 776 Medicine men have a number of guardian or assistant spirits who advise them, but who also require remuneration for their services. They also warn the medicine men against enemies. Every piache has seven or eight such spirits, each of which is invoked with a special song. The rain demon, Mareiwa, is called in song under the name Fumayule, while

the demon of illness and death, Wanuru, is called Jirarai 756
Wanuru is the name of all the spirits of the dead which are 776
many, thus we are obviously dealing here with groups of
spirits; and where Wanuru acts as guardian or assistant
spirits, they no doubt represent the souls of dead medicine
men.

One piache, known as a clever rain-maker, told us that 756
when he needed advice over rain-making, he used to go to 776
the burial place to talk with his dead brother's spirit, the
brother having been cleverer at it than he. When a piache 789
has to make rain, he seats himself on his stool as for other
functions, chews tobacco, shakes his maraca and rhythmically
moves his torso and head. He then begins to sing
in a high voice, calling upon the spirits and demanding
that they bring rain, for people need it, if they are not to
die of hunger. Now and again he emerges and dances
round the huts, driving away the spirits that are preventing
the rain from coming.

The Indians often first try to make rain without the 789
piache's help, by drumming at night or by firing guns and 821
arrows at the clouds. The drumming imitates thunder and
can thus, according to the laws of magic, cause storms. The
shooting drives away the spirits that are preventing the
cloud from dispensing its rain. This is also what they do at
eclipses of the sun, when all burst into tears and shoot at the
sky to drive away the evil spirit that is preventing the sun
from shining. A piache's own spirit does not interfere in
his magic-making, for which he uses none but auxiliary [775]
spirits. It is not till after his death that a piache's spirit can
become active and help some other piache.

The piache has to submit to certain restrictions on diet 756
and love-life. He or she must never have extra-marital 834
intercourse and even marital intercourse must be restricted.
A female piache must never spend the night with her husband,
but merely pay him fleeting visits that should be as
short as possible; she must never allow herself to be caressed [833]
by him, and must lie quite still and indifferent during
coition. If this is not done, her guardian spirit will be jealous
and angry, and may cause trouble. And, preferably, she 756 842

756 ought not to have children. The spirits can show her
various magical tricks to avoid this, but if she should
842 become pregnant, she can count on the spirit's help in
labour. Not even the male piache is allowed to partake of
[831] love more than fleetingly, almost casually. There must be
no real affection involved.

756 A woman piache cannot practice during menstruation.
[841] No piache may eat meat from animals he has received in
payment for his services. These, like other gifts, he does not
enjoy, but he can give them to his sons. Nor is he allowed
to eat meat from animals sacrificed at funerals or such feasts.
While invoking or conjuring spirits he should restrict his
diet to maize gruel.

A piache can cure all, but not himself. Sometimes, perhaps,
a sympathetic spirit may give him a little advice, which
will always help; but if he falls seriously ill, he summons a
[766 colleague, who performs the usual sorcery. When a piache
768] dies, his rattle, diadem and other attributes are chopped up
and buried in some remote and secret place. The dead
[775] piache's soul roams like those of all mortals and often clings
to the burial place, but it is never alone, being always in
company with its guardian spirit. Both can later help a new
piache.

The medicine man is thus called to his profession by revelation and no attention is paid to sex, social position or age. Women have been magicians in Guajira from of old, as is shown by their myths. The piache belongs to two worlds: those of man and of the spirits. He has not chosen to belong to them and must continue in both. He is the intermediary between these two worlds, but nowadays his influence is dwindling. As civilization penetrates the peninsula, the part he plays is becoming less and less important.

756 The first really great piache was Umaralá, of whom the
Indians relate the following:

173 In the olden days there were plenty of piaches who took
big fees, but did little. Umaralá made his cures with secret
remedies and with songs accompanied on his maraca rattle.
He lost his mother early, but was adopted as her own by his
maternal aunt, who also considered all her possessions his.

She was a piache and she loved him dearly. He lived with her in the Jarará district, and he used to go with her when her profession took her on journeys, when he listened attentively to her incantations and songs.

One day Umaralá became very ill, and not only he. An epidemic spread all over Guajira, and raged worst in the Jarará Hills. He grew better at first under his aunt's cure, but then he had a relapse and grew worse and worse. He lost the power of speech, sometimes consciousness as well, and had convulsions, while his aunt perseveringly performed her magic in the hope of preventing his death. Wondering, he listened to the conversations his aunt had with a spirit during the incantations. The spirit answered her appeals with reproaches, and it was no less a spirit than Jirarai. Distinctly the lad heard him say:

'Either you or your boy shall die.'

The aunt realized that the situation was critical and now—unfortunately not before—she called upon Jumajule, one of the good spirits who used to help her. Unhappily Jumajule could do nothing. He was not able to drive the first spirit she had invoked from her presence. That left the aunt no choice but to deliver herself to Jirarai in order to save her dear foster-son. She laid her maraca on the boy's chest and fell down, dead.

Umaralá rose at once and, weeping, took her in his arms. With him wept the only slave to have survived the epidemic. Together they then wrapped the body in an ox-hide and took it to one of the clan's burial places, where their near relatives lay. Disillusioned and depressed by his dear aunt's death and the ravages of the epidemic among his people, Umaralá withdrew from the world, dwelling in a cabin near where his aunt lay buried and living on what wild roots and fruits he could gather. Occasionally he visited his faithful slave, whose services he had not required since his aunt's death. Each evening he went to the burial place and lit a votive fire on his aunt's grave. One evening the old woman appeared to him, looking just as she had when alive, and said to him:

'Go back to Jarará, fetch my maraca and my head-dress, 756 visit the sick and treat them as I did. Only thus will you find 173 the right way. And you must change your name. Hereafter you shall be called Umaralá.' (Before that he had been called Paurala.)

Umaralá obeyed her command. He began invoking the spirits and healing the sick and soon was renowned all over Guajira for his prowess. Once the mother of a rich family fell sick. They consulted several piaches, none of whom could cure her. In the end they decided to visit Umaralá in the Jarará Hills. Two days and two nights the emissaries had to travel till they came to the famous piache's house. There they found an old man busy spinning yarn of agave fibres. He asked them what they sought, and they replied that they had been sent to find the piache Umaralá and to ask him to look at a woman who had been very ill for a long time.

'We are to give him a necklace of gold beads so that he will not refuse to come and a splendid riding mule for the journey.'

'I am Umaralá,' the old man said, 'and I do not need a riding-mule, nor will I accept your necklace until I have seen and cured the sick woman. Do you ride on, I shall follow immediately. As soon as you get back home, tell them from me that everyone must leave the house where the sick woman lies and that she must be alone all night.'

The messengers returned with this message. The woman was just as ill as ever. Umaralá's instructions were carried out and the patient left by herself. At midnight the sound of horse's hooves was heard. Someone galloped up to the ill woman's house and then came the sound of singing and the rattle of a maraca. Towards morning the sound of horse's hooves was heard again. It grew fainter and fainter. The next day the woman was quite recovered and she lived on for many years.

One morning when the slave came to his master's hut he found him ready to ride off on a splendid mule. He was carefully dressed and had his maraca hanging at his saddle. The slave asked where he was going and his master replied

that he was waiting for two men with whom he was going 756
on a long journey. One of these was from Macuira and the 173
other from Parashi. At that instant two horsemen appeared. Umaralá took farewell of his slave and told him that they would not meet again in this world, only in the next, and he enjoined the slave to tell no one of what he had seen or should see, otherwise he would die. The slave was left alone in the hut, sorrowful and wondering. He saw the riders disappear in the direction of the burial place that Umaralá so often visited. The slave then followed. He heard the death-lament, but saw no one. That was Umaralá bewailing his aunt with his friends. The slave returned home and soon became very ill. He told what he had heard and seen and died immediately afterwards.

The slave had noticed that the man from Parashi who had accompanied Umaralá, was dressed in deerskin. This man lived in a little hut and had the power to transform himself into a deer. Several Indians had seen and recognised him. He used to make and sell hammocks and other articles made of bast.

The man from Macuira who had been with Umaralá devoted himself to curing diseases. He used herbs and roots for some and cured others by burning the patient with
a red-hot iron point. He was also a sooth-sayer and could 791
make rain. His name was Jurariana. 789

Once there was a dreadful drought that made many people leave Macuira and go to the savannas. Famine came to the hills. Now people knew that Jurariana could make rain and when he came to a place called Chamaru they flocked round him. In the end, in order to compel him to make rain, they tied him to a post in the sun and told him that they would not loose him until he had brought rain. This he did. After two hours, there was a big shower. The chief Juanito Epiayú was a very good friend of Jurariana and often summoned him when there was a drought, arranging dancing with much drinking and races. Jurariana then made rain.

This rain-maker vanished, none could say how. Another pretended to be Jurariana rejuvenated, but the chief sent for

791 him and found that he could not make rain at all, but was
789 an impostor, so he was driven away with blows and was glad
to escape with his life.

Even in the days when the reputation of the piache stood
756 high, the Guajiro would not infrequently seek the help of
the famous medicine men of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,
the so-called *mamás*, in whom many Creoles believed. A
Guajiro who could manage to do so would take a sick
person there or an article of clothing or some ornament that
the invalid had worn. The medicine men of the mountain
Indians would use this to diagnose the disease, and the
messenger would return with a herbal medicine. The
health-bringing plants were broken up and preserved in
spirits. People liked to acquire such medicine especially
before a child was born; it was then poured into the
infant's bath water and the mother drank a gulp of it.
The effect of it depended on the magical power of the
plants.

757 The Guajiro themselves used certain plants as medicine.
Sometimes these really were effective, but often it was just a
824 question of sorcery. A plant with much milky sap, for
example, was laid on a mother's breast if her milk failed.
The powers possessed by the mountain Indians of Sierra
Nevada were attributed to the circumstance that they
possessed the secret of invoking specially powerful spirits,
whose essence also permeated the herbal medicines people
got from them. The effect of the herbs thus came from the
[illegible] spirits residing in them. Intoxicating drinks acted through
the spirits liberated in the process of fermentation; that was
a common belief among the Indians.

The Guajiro believed in omens and portents. Various
787 animals foretold misfortune or death. A wild cat wailing
825 round the house at night, a bat that persisted in following
one through the darkness, in certain circumstances also a
snake beside the house, all portended trouble or sorrow.
The Indians paid special attention to the behaviour of a
number of birds and interpreted this as indicating the
approach of visitors, the imminence of something un-
pleasant, etc. When they thought they had observed such a

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920,1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

portent, they would usually summon a piache or a soothsayer in order to find out for certain. 787
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Let us now leave medicine men, for it is time to go out on our travels again.

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957

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Indians with a stolen goat near the Cusina Hills

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The white man's dangerous magic: the film-camera

Below: *Indian camp with cactus fence*

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[facing p. 144]

CHAPTER 11

The Brigands of Cusina

000 LIFE is a restless, not to say nerve-racking, business in Guajira. We had to be continually on our guard to a greater or lesser extent, and we never had a minute to ourselves. We were continually surrounded by Indians coming and going, wanting to sell, to buy, to exchange, to grouse, to inspect us and all that was ours. We liked the Indians, yet we had a feeling of being in danger.

We were ready to go to the Macuira Hills and get to know the rest of Guajira. We had a better caravan now, thin though the animals were. Father Crispin had helped me to buy them. Francisco Ipuana was coming with us as body-servant, if I may call him that. He was neither shrewd nor bold, but at least he was reliable and loyal. The monks had told him to serve us well, and that was enough for him. On his recommendation we engaged another young Indian [124] who spoke not a word of Spanish and whom we called José. We had learned a little Guajiro and, besides, we had Francisco to interpret. We started off with two other Indians as well, but they were to come only as far as Castilletes on the coast to the south. From there we intended to travel along the coast, make an excursion into Venezuela, and then cross the peninsula from south to north and so return to Rio Hacha, from which we had started.

We were quite melancholy at saying good-bye to the friendly monks and nuns, and Father Salvador gave us his blessing, heretics though we were. We had quite a company of Indians going with us. There was a rich Indian on his way to a funeral, who had his family and household with him. Francisco whispered to me that there was nothing bad

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Goajiro women are stocky and powerfully built

Below: Frontier guard—Paraguaipoa

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[facing p. 145]

known of his clan. The road across the hills was bad, and at 580
times we had to dismount and walk. Now and again we met [487]
Indians; the well-to-do leading their riding-mules, the poor
followed by half-naked women carrying loads. The men [556
carried lots of arrows. The road was reputed unsafe. The 481]
leader of each such company received a little tobacco, We [492]
heard that they were all coming from the funeral, which
evidently was one of importance and would last quite a
while yet. Our companion, the rich Indian, said that he
expected to reach the house of mourning in six days. He
thought that we ought to go there too, but the place lay a
good distance off our route and we had had our fill of Indian
feasts for the time being.

Francisco had travelled with Father Crispin and knew the 123
district. He advised us to halt for the night early in an Indian rancho ringed with a stout cactus palisade, where friendly people lived. We could have gone farther, and the Indians with us who were going to the funeral carried on, but then, according to Francisco, they would not have been welcome at the rancho. We never learned the ins and outs of the Indians' friendships and enmities.

At the rancho we bartered a piece of raw sugar against a sheep. Both our pack and riding animals were already tired. They had had far too little fodder and the water was salt. The Indians were up before cock-crow, as always, and we let them get the mules ready. If we could just get to Castilletes, they should have fodder and decent water: we needed
provisions ourselves. But what about the sheep, asks the [252
attentive reader. That went the same evening we bought it, 262]
our hosts partaking of it as heartily as our own people. It went, offal, guts and all. When nothing but the bones were left, these were split and the marrow sucked out. Then the women gathered up the remains for broth. That sheep cost the equivalent of fourpence-halfpenny. Our means were limited, but at such prices we could at least afford to feed our men. The difficulty was in getting hold of things to eat. The Indians know how to tighten their belts and are prepared to starve for a while, if need be, but they must have a blow-out now and again.

231 422 [133] Later that day we reached the coast at Castilletes. It was desert country there, dreary, full of sand-dunes and furrowed with salt water channels. There we came across an emaciated horse, a poor brute that had obviously strayed and was now desperately looking for water and grazing that did not exist. It stopped and drank sea-water. It must have been dying, and the kindest thing would have been to shoot it, but that could have cost us dear. The owner would have demanded unreasonable compensation. Instead, the Indians went to see what clan mark it had, so that they could report to their fellows in Castilletes. News spreads quickly among the Indians. The owner would not have much joy of his horse, for the hide could not be worth much, but he would learn where it was to be found.

Francisco got us to Castilletes easily. He had been there often before, even once on our behalf—to fetch gold, literally, for we were expecting a transfer of money from Caracas and it came in the form of gold. American, Venezuelan and Colombian gold and silver coinage circulated in Guajira, but the Indians would have nothing to do with notes.

694 There was, of course, a certain risk in conveying several hundred gold coins through Guajira from a slave-port like Castilletes, where there were plenty of shady characters. The money, however, was packed in boxes made for photographic plates and the same schooner from Maracaibo brought some packages for the monks, to whom our money was also addressed. The boxes interested neither Customs nor others. Francisco rode a wretched horse and had dressed in his worst jacket and a pair of indecently ragged trousers, so that he did not look as though he were carrying large sums on him, while his horse would not have tempted any thief. Thus, all had gone well, Francisco had not been nervous, though we had.

070 Castilletes was the only place on the south coast where white people lived and to which whites frequently came. Schooners from Venezuela put in there. The frontier between Colombia and Venezuela ran between the houses, of which there were about a dozen in those days. The sur-

rounding country was utterly sterile and nothing could be 580 grown there, so that Castilletes was entirely dependent on supplies from Maracaibo. On the days when boats came in, the inhabitants often had to let the crews have their meagre dog's ration of water, for, if the voyage had been at all protracted, the boat's own supplies would have been exhausted. Why those schooners could not carry more water—of which there was no lack in Maracaibo—I do not know, but in that part of the world people are not provident, but take each day as it comes. Often they did not have enough water to make coffee, which is almost more important to the Creoles than to us.

We arrived during the siesta and went at once to the shop which was on the Venezuela side of the frontier—to avoid difficulties with the Customs, it was said. We never saw a Customs officer, but perhaps one came sometimes with a schooner. I had a letter from the monks to the owner of the shop and thinking, like all queer foreigners, that I was in a hurry, I dismounted outside the shop, gave the half-open door a push and strode in. The shopkeeper lay in his hammock asleep. He had a rifle beside him and a revolver in his belt. He started up like lightning, seized his rifle and gaped at me, and still more at my wife, who now appeared in the doorway. I told him who we were and gave greetings from the monks. He bade us welcome and excused himself for being armed.

'You always have to be on your guard here,' he said, 'not only against the Indians, but against everyone you do not know.'

The man was proud of being able to read and write. The monks were evidently good customers and because of that, he said, he would sell to us at the prices he asked of his friends. Everyone says that, but what he made us pay was so much more than we had expected, that we had to forego an additional donkey, which we really needed.

Venezuela is an expensive country and the shop had no competitors. We could do nothing. I tried to beat him down and told him that I must in order to buy a donkey, but then he just said that no animal I would find in Castilless was worth having. If he himself had had a donkey to sell, his tune no doubt would have been very different.

Francisco, however, whispered to me that he was sure we should be able to get a donkey en route in exchange for one of my barter pistols. It was not easy to hit anything with these, but they made a loud report and a lot of smoke, and it was to that that the Indians attached most importance.

The donkey I did not get was to have been loaded with maize for our animals. We had to take maize with us, for otherwise, on that route, the animals would have starved to death, leaving us in a fix. The Creoles always gave their horses maize, using it as we do oats; but many *Guajiro* animals from the areas where there was grazing had never tasted it, and that was the case with several of ours. In order to accustom them to it, we had to mix it with raw sugar, and then it went down.

When our business was done, the shopkeeper wanted to offer us refreshments. We had a choice between a red fruit drink that looked poisonous, and spirits which we knew were poisonous. We chose the fruit drink, when we saw that it was of American make and thus the water in it, presumably, not infected. It was lukewarm, tasted of chemicals and stained our mouths red.

We, naturally, had to pay our respects to the two countries' representatives in Castilletes. They received us courteously and made us listen to long warnings. It was their duty, they said, to warn us against continuing our travels in Guajira. They could take no responsibility for us, though neither had they the power to stop us. To pass Sierra de Cosina, where the ill-famed bandits lived, was all but certain death.

When we persisted, they said that they must do as Pilate and wash their hands of us, but only symbolically. People could not afford to wash in Castilletes, nor could one expect them to, when water was so expensive and difficult to get.

Then, not wanting to spend the night in Castilletes, we set off again, although it was well on in the day. We hoped to visit a chief who was with his herds somewhere in the neighbourhood. We did not know exactly where he was at 500 the time, but hoped that our Indians with their tracker's sense would be able to find him.

We were unlucky, however. Our animals were tired, and had the maize sacks to carry as additional loads, and our progress was very slow. We had bought a pack mule, which Father Crispin had thought highly of. He was an expert on Guajiro animals, which are not quite like others, but this time he had evidently made a mistake for the mule was useless. We heard Francisco shouting at it alternately in Spanish and Guajiro ; the Indians hauled on its halter and kicked it from behind, but nothing helped. When we came to a place where there was a little grass, we decided to halt and sleep there among the ants on the ground. Mules never seem to sleep: they trot by day and graze by night. I asked Francisco when they slept. The question astounded him: he had never thought of mules as requiring sleep.

We were so tired that, as soon as the animals had been loosed on to the grass and our camp set up, we fell asleep without thought of ants or other creatures. Although we had not *found* the chief, he *found* us. He must have had his scouts out. Anyway, in the morning he rode into our camp and invited us to his temporary residence, which was quite close. The shortage of pasture had turned him into a nomad.

This chief, Antonio, was a mestizo. He had no Indian clan name, but called himself Gonzales. Certain mestizos and mulattos had Indianized themselves and become rich men, not always in an exemplary manner. Once rich, owning slaves and cattle, they also acquired power and were called chiefs, at least by white people. They were not real chiefs of clans.

We were given a most friendly and hospitable reception. A cloth was put up to protect us from the sun, and refreshing chicha, the fermented maize beer, was served us all day long. The food was good: grilled beef, maize rolls, the black fruits called olives, boiled roots of some sort imported from moister regions, and cactus figs, which the Indians called *iguaraya*. The chief and his family lived in the centre of the [273] [262] camp, and round about in the sparse shade of cactus and divi-divi trees, were the slaves. Antonio was a decent fellow and himself doled out the food to his dependants: it was rationed, but ample.

He had two good-looking daughters, who never did a hand's turn with the food or the rough work, which is not considered suitable for a fine Guajiro girl. On the other hand, they wove industriously, either sitting, or even lying, in hammocks. The chief had many colourful cloaks. Francisco said that the girls' bride-price would be equivalent to several thousand pesos.

Of course, we had to go and admire our host's big herds of cattle and horses, which were thin, but well looked after by Guajiro standards. Antonio knew nothing of the world beyond the peninsula, but he was interested and full of questions.

When the time came to go on, we decided to leave our miserable pack mule there. Our host, the honest chief, lent us two donkeys and came with us in person to introduce us to his neighbour who might have a mule to sell. This neighbour was also a mestizo, and, unusually enough, a ridiculous hypochondriac, most unfitting for a Guajiro big-wig. He said that his eyes hurt and wheedled himself a pair of dark glasses, in which he looked quite foolish. When he heard that we had a medicine chest, he began complaining of all sorts of ills in his throat, stomach and everywhere else. I wrapped his neck in cotton-wool and poured our worst tasting medicines into him, but unfortunately I had no castor oil to give him. For all my treatment, he refused to sell me a mule. In the end I managed to persuade him to hire me two donkeys, though he insisted on sending one of his slave-workers with them to bring them back. Naturally he wanted to charge for the Indian too, though he paid him no wages. It was the same with the donkeys: what he charged was scandalous, but we were forced to pay, as he very well knew. We left him lying in his hammock, bathed in sweat and groaning with imagined pains.

We all liked the idea of having one extra for the next stage, when we were to pass between the sea and the Cosina

Hills, the most dangerous part of the peninsula. There were 000
no chiefs there, no cattle and no other Indians than chance travellers. The new member of our company, however, proved to be lazy and useless from the very first. Francisco had got it into his head that the mestizo had sent his slave with us in order to steal my double-barrelled gun—for which he had asked in return for hiring us the donkeys, an offer that I pretended to take as a jest, since such a gun was worth its weight in gold in Guajira. The mestizo's slave boasted to Francisco that he had killed an Indian, so Francisco went in fear that he would try to kill me in order to get the gun. It certainly was not as bad as that. The man was really quite timid and everybody had their eye on him.

Now began the exciting part of our journey. As we were 579
to go quite close to the dreaded hills, I consulted the only 619
reliable authority I had, the English engineer, Simmons's, account of them. 'As far as the terrible Cusina are concerned,' he wrote, 'it must be pointed out that their name in the Guajiro tongue means "thief", "brigand". They are not a distinct clan or sub-division, as is sometimes maintained. They have been accused of being cannibals—Reclus, the geographer, wrote that the Guajiro tremble at the thought of being roasted and eaten by them. This, however, is incorrect and there is no proof of any such thing. It is true that the Guajiro fear them and will not pass their haunt, unless they are numerous enough to defend themselves and their herds; but their fear is that which people always have of robbers and brigands, when they have property to protect. In actual fact, it is difficult to find a Guajiro who does not have a relation among the Cusina.' He then gives some examples of this, and continues: 'These Cusina are nothing but a band of robbers expelled from their clans as a result of quarrels, murder or theft, and thereby compelled to plunder in order to live. In order to be better able to defend themselves and to have more success in attack, they have joined together in larger and smaller bands under recognized leaders. Thus they can organize plundering expeditions. If they find themselves strong enough, they will surprise less

579 619 numerous and worse armed companies and take what they have. The various bands, however, have no mutual respect or consideration, but will plunder each other if they can. Perhaps a Guajiro with a relation among the attackers can count on some consideration, unless his relative is inimical. However, the Guajiro do sometimes do business with the [151] Cusina, and also can negotiate and secure the return of stolen animals. The Cusina's haunt is the Cojoro Hills and a narrow strip of the lowland is also accounted theirs.' He then named the leaders of that time and told where they and their men were. In those days the Cusina had a number of plantations in the lowland, and also cattle, though they could not be bothered to look after these, but preferred to live by banditry. Simmons also says that it was the Cusina who sold the poisoned arrows.

Nearly forty years had passed since Simmons had journeyed in those parts and it was obvious that the Cusina were no longer so numerous nor so dominant, though one still had to take heed of them and be on one's guard. We were to learn that they could still make daring raids to parts far from their haunts. All unattached Indians one met in the vicinity of the hills were held to be Cusina—it was safest so.

Attack and highway robbery was one thing, ordinary [626] theft another. If a thief was caught, it cost him dear in compensation, but theft itself, as we heard in connection with Chinca, was almost regarded as a sport. It was thus common for poor Indians at least to pinch things from those who were better off. We, of course, were considered very rich.

685 674 It was not to be wondered at if an Indian, having nothing to eat during the worst of the drought, appropriated a bit of this and that from those who were better off. If he knew that he would be able to repay it, it became a sort of loan, without the owner's permission.

Once, some Indians got in ahead of the monks when the time came to harvest the manioc at the mission's plantation in Macuira. When the monks came there with the mission's children to carry it home, all had gone. In the hope of preventing this happening again, the monks decided to com-

plain to the civil authorities; but the government inspector 685
at the coast just smiled and shook his head when they asked 679
if he could do anything about it.

'The only advice I can give you is that you double your plantation next year. Then perhaps the crop will suffice both for you and the Indians.'

When a monk once reproached an Indian who worked at the mission for pilfering sugar, the Indian replied: 'But, father, every Indian steals!'

As Simmons thought, the Cusina are made up of the 579
bad elements, those outcast from their clans. In the long 614
run no clan can shield a member who commits all sorts of
crimes. Some flee to the hills because they cannot pay com- 619
pensation for someone they have killed, nor count on help
from their clan, which perhaps is also without resources.
Such people are real outcasts, for anyone can kill them with-
out risk of their clan's exacting vengeance. These outcasts 579
once took refuge in the most desolate hills of the penin- 619
sula, Sierra de Cusina, and ever since others have come to
replenish their ranks. It was said that they also had women,
either captured or runaways. Grazing and water were said
to be scarce there. It was a desolate part and none disputed
it with the Cusina. They had to live largely by plunder and
robbery. They could only keep goats in their hills, so what
cattle they rustled, they ate. They were keen to get arms.
We were told that none then alive had ever seen a Cusina.
They attacked by night and killed everyone. That, of course,
was the old Guajiro way: let no one live who might con-
ceivably exact vengeance.

The old accounts from the days of the conquest also mention Cusina, but they must have meant ordinary Guajiro Indians from the area of the Cusina Hills.

The brigands were supposed to have scouts out on the 579
roads, who signalled to their comrades when they scented
prey. They very seldom dared attack a well-armed com-
pany, as ours was. We three white people each had a gun
or rifle and a pistol; and in reserve we had some of my cheap
barter pistols. We equipped Francisco with a saloon pistol
which had a long barrel and looked impressive. Then we

579 hit upon the idea of stuffing our two canvas gun covers with maize and other things and letting the other two Indians carry them. In that way, it looked as though we were all armed, at least from a distance.

Thus we began our march past the brigands' hills.

The Cusina were always active at night, when they would at least try to steal our animals. We decided to travel by night and camp and sleep during the day. As long as the sun was up, there was little danger of attack. Also it was cooler travelling at night, for the heat there was terrible by day, since the hills shut off the breeze, the eternal north-east trade wind, and there was no shade. Luckily Francisco and the Indian slave-worker knew where to look for water. The casimbas there were mostly covered over and intended only for the initiated. The water was everywhere bad, turbid and brackish.

We were not able to carry out our plan in its entirety. As long as there was moonlight, we could ride, but in the evenings we had to rest, water the animals and wait for the moon. When the animals were to be watered, they had to be unsaddled and their packs stacked.

By the water-hole to which we went the first evening was an abandoned, tumble-down ranch. This was apparently the scene of an incident of which we had heard in Castilletes and also from Antonio. Despite warnings, a young Indian of a chief's family had foolishly taken it into his head to ride alone past the Cusina Hills. He had a Winchester rifle and rode a very good, fast horse, and so thought that he could get away from any of the Cusina, who were seldom mounted. However, he had to water his horse in the evening, as we had, and the Cusina had fallen upon him then, killed him, cut out his heart and taken his horse and rifle. Thus we had no need to fear any lack of alertness or caution on our Indians' part at that spot. We went on as soon as the moon had risen.

We rested during the worst of the heat, using a tent cloth to shield us from the sun. The grazing was wretched. The animals could only find one blade here, another there, and we had already begun to ration their maize, since our

Indians also had to have some of it. Fortunately, we had 579
plenty of oatmeal, and we got the Indians to eat porridge.

The Indians we met, almost all on foot, were well armed with lots of arrows and often a gun and a well-stuffed cartridge belt besides. Custom required that all we met [576] should be given tobacco, but the Cusina being reputed expert at seizing an outstretched hand and pulling a rider off his horse, we did as the Indian chiefs do and without pulling up threw a cigar to those we met with a gay injunction to catch it.

The shadowy figures that slipped away among the cactus trees when we met them by night were most suspicious. Those were not pleasant encounters. Even by moonlight anyone could see that we were three white people, but whether the shadows were Cusina or others with bad consciences we could not tell. Our large packages must have looked desirable to Cusina eyes, but they largely consisted looked desirable to Cusina eyes, but they largely consisted of Indian things, that is to say, our collections. The brigands would have been disappointed if they had opened them!

The hills we now had to the north of us were quite different in character from the gentle Macuira Hills. Tall, [133] menacing masses of stone rose up here and there flanked by razor-sharp ridges. In the naked, grim ravines among them dwelled the Cusina, spying out across the plain from the verges of secret precipices, like vultures looking for their prey. One evening, we came to another abandoned rancho beside a casimba. We had already unsaddled and stacked the packs, when we discovered that the casimba was empty. The Indians knew there was another water-hole not far away. The animals had to be watered, so despite the risk involved, we had to split up.

We three white people stayed with the baggage, while the Indians went off with the animals and our water-vessels. My wife had fever and had to lie down, which she did with her little pistol beside her. Gladtvet and I kept watch, rifle in hand. We had piled the baggage on a slight eminence, so that even in the darkness we had a certain view of our surroundings. Meanwhile our men had vanished in thick dividivi scrub, in which anyone but an Indian would have got

57H helplessly lost. This scrub would also have permitted any Cusina to sneak up quite close to us without being seen.

Francisco had said that it was not far to the water-hole, but they did not come back. An hour passed, then another. The situation was becoming really unpleasant. Suddenly, two muffled shots sounded in the distance. What had happened?

We had not agreed on any shot signals, though we had given Francisco one of our guns. Was it he who had fired, or the Cusina? Whoever it was, it was best to show that we were prepared, so we fired one shot with my shot-gun, the rifle only making a sharp little crack. Then there was silence. The echo rolled away towards the grim, sterile hills, and before it had died away, we heard the rustling of small frightened little animals dashing away. Some night birds lifted on noiseless wings. Then both we and Nature round us held our breath. We heard no more shots. But *if* the first shots had meant that the Cusina were attacking, we could expect to hear from them too. If they had not seen us before, they now knew that there were people both in the scrub down by the water-hole and on the hillock. And if the Cusina had overwhelmed our men and taken our animals, what were we to do in the most barren, desolate and dangerous part of Guajira?

Ssh! What was that? Something was moving in the scrub, where our men had disappeared. The moon was just rising and we could see quite well. A little shape slipped out from the edge of the scrub and vanished with light, swift, silent bounds out on to the savanna. It was a deer. Presumably it was off to lick the dew from the cactus flowers. One could well understand that this lovely animal with its gentle, mournful eyes spent its life going from flower to flower.

The absence of our men was becoming really alarming. At last we heard voices. We listened intently. Yes, it was Francisco calling. We shouted back. Soon we could also hear the animals snorting. There was no doubt. All was well. Then they emerged from the scrub and we learned the explanation.

The second water-hole had also proved to be dry, when 579 they eventually found it. However, the chief's slave-worker, who was supposed to want to get my shot-gun, had known that there was a third water-hole some distance away. Francisco had never trusted the man, and no doubt had his reasons, but there was nothing to do but to follow him. It had been quite a long distance to this third water-hole and it had taken a lot of finding. The slave had not been sure of the way; but with their wonderful instinct they had reached it, and there was water in it.

Thus the slave had not deceived them, but Francisco had still felt uncomfortable. That was when he had fired the two shots. He wanted an answering signal so as to know that nothing had happened to us. I pointed out that the shots could have drawn the Cusina down on him. He had not thought of that, not being especially bright. However, we were no longer split up and the animals had had all the water they could drink. It was time to move on and we kept going till the heat of the coming day forced us to rest.

We flung ourselves down under a cactus and hung up a piece of canvas to protect us from the sun. The Indians made a fire with two pieces of stick and some dry horse-dung. This they fed with cactus branches and then put a pot of sea-water over the fire. Had they gone crazy, we asked.

No, Francisco told us, they were going to cure the animals of their tiredness. And hastily he added that the treatment was external.

When the water was hot the Indians took calabashes, 579 filled them and poured the water over the animals' legs. The 232 poor brutes leaped and jumped. The water was too hot and I pointed this out. Francisco explained that this was a recognized way of curing tired legs and pointed out that the animals had not been so lively for weeks. However, they cannot have liked the treatment much, for when the Indians approached with their 'medicine', they moved away. I forbade them to use scalding water; but when it had cooled somewhat they continued, expertly flinging calabash after

579 [232] calabash of salt water over the animals' legs. The fact remains that both riding and pack animals trotted along considerably more briskly that day.

The following day we could see Jepitz, solitary cone-shaped hill of the savannas, blue in the distance. The Cusina Hills had withdrawn. The worst of the danger from bandits must now be over, we thought. We were to learn, however, that the bandits made longer raids than we had imagined.

If we had now set course for Jepitz, or La Teta as the Creoles called it, we could have cut across western Guajira to Rio Hacha, a short cut that would have taken only a few days. We had other plans, however. We wanted to go into Venezuela, to which Southern Guajira and the coast up to Castilletes belongs, and visit the Sinamaica lagoons where, on the shores of Lake Maracaibo, live the Paraujano Indians, the Guajiro's nearest relatives. While the Guajiro's country is as dry as a desert, one could almost call the Paraujano water Indians, for they live in pile-dwellings out in the water. We knew that they did not retain as much of their original culture as did the Guajiro, though they still dwelt as their ancestors had, but even so we felt that it would be interesting to visit them. Also, as we had to admit to ourselves, the thought of all that water was tempting after going short for so long. There were still wide savannas ahead of us, but we knew that the worst was over.

594 We now came across a minor chief with his herds. He had camped under some trees and welcomed us with exaggerated friendliness, but then both he and his men had already had one over the eight. However, they were still at the merry stage, though fighting would inevitably come later. The chief had bought no small quantity of spirits. There was a whole row of kegs. When he heard that we intended to continue, which obviously grieved him considerably, he tried to press one of these kegs on us. We were to take it and drink his health on our way. We managed with considerable difficulty to decline the gifts and instead received a hammock, sandals and some arrows, which we valued much more. Then off we went.

The savanna was almost bare and we could not hang up

our hammocks to sleep. When I was a student, one of the very stock questions asked by our professor of geography was: 'Why don't the Indians of Patagonia sleep in hammocks?' The correct answer was: 'The trees are too few and far between.' The Indians of Guajira took stakes with them, [513]
which they drove into the hard ground when they made camp; but we could not give our animals such an extra burden and so had to sleep on the ground where there were ants and giant millipedes. Cactus bushes could suddenly [136]
come to life and a branch stretch towards one with spikes jutting, ready to sting, so good was their camouflage when sitting on a cactus.

We now met some very friendly Indians. As they sat by 773
their fire they began telling myths and legends, and when they noticed that we were interested they continued. We learned that some blocks of stone that we would see the next morning and which had human shape, were really white people who had been petrified. They had died of thirst. Arijuna, the white ones, cannot stand thirst. The Indians can go three days without water, but the white man will endure only one. Therefore Mareiwa, the rain-spirit, said to the white people: 'You live for ever dying of thirst.'

We agreed with that.

We could hear the roar of surf. Calimaule, the old Bearded One, told us that the noise really came from wild cattle bellowing out there, having been hunted and finally driven out into the water where some were transformed into turtles, others into rocks.

'There are dangers, here,' the old man went on. There's a majayura, a maiden, lives in a cave in one rock, and lures men to their doom. No living person can enter the cave, but the siren—we can call her that—roams around in rich and beautiful clothes. (She shows similarities—like her Moorish counterpart, to our water- or wood-nymphs.) The majayura now and again emerges by day as well, shows herself to someone she likes, leads him astray and to her grotto, where she lets him taste of her mysteries. He is so enchanted by his experiences that he never returns. That

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[illegible]
[illegible]

Below: Mule caravan near the Indian border

[illegible]

[facing p. 160]

773 is why many men have been found dead or have disappeared without trace. If anyone has managed to return having known all her mysteries, he says not a word, for to do so would mean certain death.

Majayura also drowns men. They see a white rock and approach it inquisitively. It seems to be not far away, yet it keeps withdrawing, enticing the men into the sea where they drown.

Then the Indians began to tell about the hills of the peninsula and how they came into being. There are many of them and the stories became involved, sometimes contradictory. Each area and perhaps each clan obviously had its own version. Let me here give only, and very briefly, the story of the brothers, the three most important tops: Jepira, the woman's breast, that we could see blue in the distance; Ituhor away in Macuira that we had just left, and Camaichi at Cabo de la Vela. The Bearded One had a short version. He said:

'Once upon a time there were three brothers, Jepitz, Ituhor and Camaichi, who roamed Guajira. They stopped at different places which they never wished to leave and where they still are as hill tops. The first wanted to live by that beautifully shaped breast because he liked cactus figs so much; the second wanted to be at Ituhor because he loved toasted maize as his name shows, and the third wanted fish from the sea and stopped at Cabo de la Vela.'

One of the other Indians had a longer story about the three. Originally the brothers lived in western Guajira, near the river, where there was good grazing and maize could be grown. All three dreamed that they ought to go and roam. This worried them, because they were reluctant to leave their uncle for whom they had great respect and whose heirs they were. When they went to him and told him of their dream, he advised them to go, because dreams ought to be obeyed. So they went away and stayed for some time on the savannas of the central part of the peninsula. There Jepira said to his brothers: 'Dear brothers, I have fallen in love with a girl here and shall stay with her for ever. Continue your journey.' The others went on and came

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Goajiro Indians in the leafy south. One is painted

Below: The Indians' Venice

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[Facing p. 161]

to Cabo de la Vela. There Camaichi said one day: 'I am sorry to part from you, my brother, but I have fallen in love with the sea and shall stay here for ever. Do you continue your journey.' The third brother travelled on and came to the uttermost edge of the peninsula, and there he settled and lived for the rest of his days, delighted by the fertile soil. (That is where there is running water.)

But when their lives were drawing to a close, they all dreamed the same dream at the same time. The great Mareiwa appeared to them and said: 'All must die and be transformed, but you shall be transformed into hill tops, as memorials to your love. You, Jepitz, for a woman; you, Camaichi, for the sea, and you, Ituhor, for the soil and its crops.'

Transformation into stone is a usual myth in the Andean civilizations and in nearby Sierra Nevada, and I thought it interesting to hear similar myths even here. Next came something that really made me prick my ears, for the old Bearded One now began to tell the story of the flood. The short tales he told were genuinely Indian.

In the olden days, he said, the sea was small and narrow like a lagoon. There lived a bird, a hen pelican, which laid an egg on the shore. Then came the first Indian. He was still young and dark-complexioned, being burned by the sun. He was curious when he saw the egg and asked the hen pelican what it was doing lying there. The pelican replied that the egg contained a secret that only she knew. The Indian had to be content with that and went to a dance. In the morning he again passed the egg, but then the pelican was not there. Seizing the chance, the Indian broke the egg to see what was inside. But the sea was enclosed in the egg and it at once spread all over the land so that only the tops of Jepitz and Ituhor rose above the water. The Indian and the pelican took refuge on Jepitz, and all the other animals on Ituhor. The pelican managed all right, because she could catch small fish by the shore. She was disgruntled, however, because her egg had been broken. She had shut the sea up there, so that she alone could enjoy the fish. The Indian found the space confined. He began peevishly throwing stones into the water. The stones grew into cliffs and the sea had to withdraw gradually and the land became as it is now.

That then was the Guajiro version of the story of the flood. We know that it is based on reality. Apart from the subsidences and raisings of the land that have taken place there during the various geological periods, the whole lowland is flooded almost every year during the period of the rains.

In the myths men associate with all sorts of animals and speak with them. According to the primitive conception animals are people too, though of different tribes and with different languages.

The old man continued with the tale of events after the flood.

The dance the Indian had visited continued. There bat, hen, cock, vulture, woodpecker and other creatures met, danced and had a good time—all except the pelican which still grieved over the sea it had lost. During this dance the hen fell in love with the bat. Everyone at the dance became hungry, but there was nothing to eat. Only the woodpecker was well-fed. When the Indian asked him where he had managed to find anything edible, he replied that he had a little plot where he had sown cactus and he harvested and ate its fruits.

After a while the woodpecker became hungry again and left the company. The Indian sneaked after him and found the plot which the woodpecker had hidden away, yet had boasted of because he was drunk with much maize beer. The Indian took his sling and with it strewed ripe fruits all over the peninsula, so that cactus should grow everywhere for the benefit of all. There were a number of fruits left and he took these back to feed the dancers.

Towards morning the dancers began to complain that they had nothing to rest in after the exertions of the dance. There were not even trees with branches on which the birds could perch. The Indian went off again to see if he could find anything suitable. He came across a lame old man who was sitting making hammocks of bast. The Indian wanted

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

to buy them, but the old man refused to sell. The Indian pretended to go away, but hid behind a cactus to see where the old man got the bast from. So he saw that the old man did not have agaves from which he could make bast, but that he took the fibres from his nose. At that the Indian rushed up, wrenched off the man's nose and flung its contents to east and west, so as to sow agave for everybody. When he looked round, the old man had been transformed into a tree-stump. The Indian returned with all the hammocks and the dancers were able to rest.

Here the Indian played the part of the civiliser bringing the others various benefits, to the discomfort of those who wished to keep everything for themselves. The old man who turned into a tree-stump would seem to have been a plant-demon, the spirit of the agave.

That was not quite the end of the tale of the first Indian. That night the Indian saw that the bat was sleeping with the hen in the same hammock and he became angry, thinking them an ill-assorted pair. The bat is an ugly animal and so that the hen should not see him by daylight, he used to get up very early, when the cock crew, and go off. The Indian discovered this and persuaded the cock not to crow the next morning till it was light. Then the bat overslept and all the animals saw him and the hen together and jeered at them. The hen refused to have anything more to do with him. The next night the bat returned to avenge himself and bit the hen so many times that she was on the point of bleeding to death. Ever since her movements have been ungainly and she cannot dance nearly as well as the vulture.

The birds decided to hold a competition: who could sing first in the morning. The cock crowed earliest—the others having overslept. The Indian praised him and gave him the prize. In gratitude the cock presented him with two feathers from his tail. The Indians wear such feathers in their brow-bands when they are on journeys. They are good, because the cock is up early and a very alert bird. Then they drank a lot of maize beer.

There was silence for a while, as the audience pondered this tale. Then another old man began speaking and all

773 listened attentively, for he was very old and knew more than most.

'Arijuna, the white man, is made of earth and his wife of his rib, you say that yourselves. But we, wayú, the Indians, originated differently. When the first spirit divided the earth among his descendants he gave Guajira to a daughter, but forgot that the sea washed over half the peninsula. When he noticed his mistake, he made the land raise itself out of the water, whereupon his daughter married Mareech, Time, he who has always existed. Their daughter married Para, the Sea, and by him she had two children, a boy Juyap, the Rain Season, and a girl, Igua, the Spring. And hear now what happened: Spring married the Trade Wind, Jepirech, and from them came the Guajiros. Therefore Juyap, the Rain Season, is the esteemed uncle of all Guajiros.'

[illegible] We continued our journey. Nearer Venezuela we came to a regular park landscape with cactus trees. The lakes marked on our map had dried up entirely, as was to be expected at the height of the drought. We decided to make for a place called Paraguaipoa, where there was supposed to be a fort and a Venezuelan garrison. The animals were very tired and our progress slow. Then a grove of palms appeared in the distance, real coconut palms; it was fantastic! It was evidently Paraguaipoa. The sight of the waving green crowns seemed to revive our animals, but the pack donkeys' heads still drooped. We left the caravan under command of Gladwyn and rode on ahead towards the palms.

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Pile-dwellings with a kitchen garden

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Indians wait patiently while the leader of the expedition sleeps in his hammock

Below: Flock being driven over the steppe

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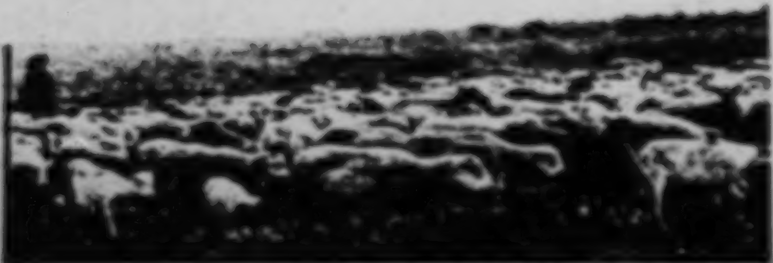

[facing p. 176]

7:Bolinder T-S (1920, 1955) 1957
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The ferry-man on the Calancala River

Derricks in Lake Maracaibo

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[Facing p. 177]

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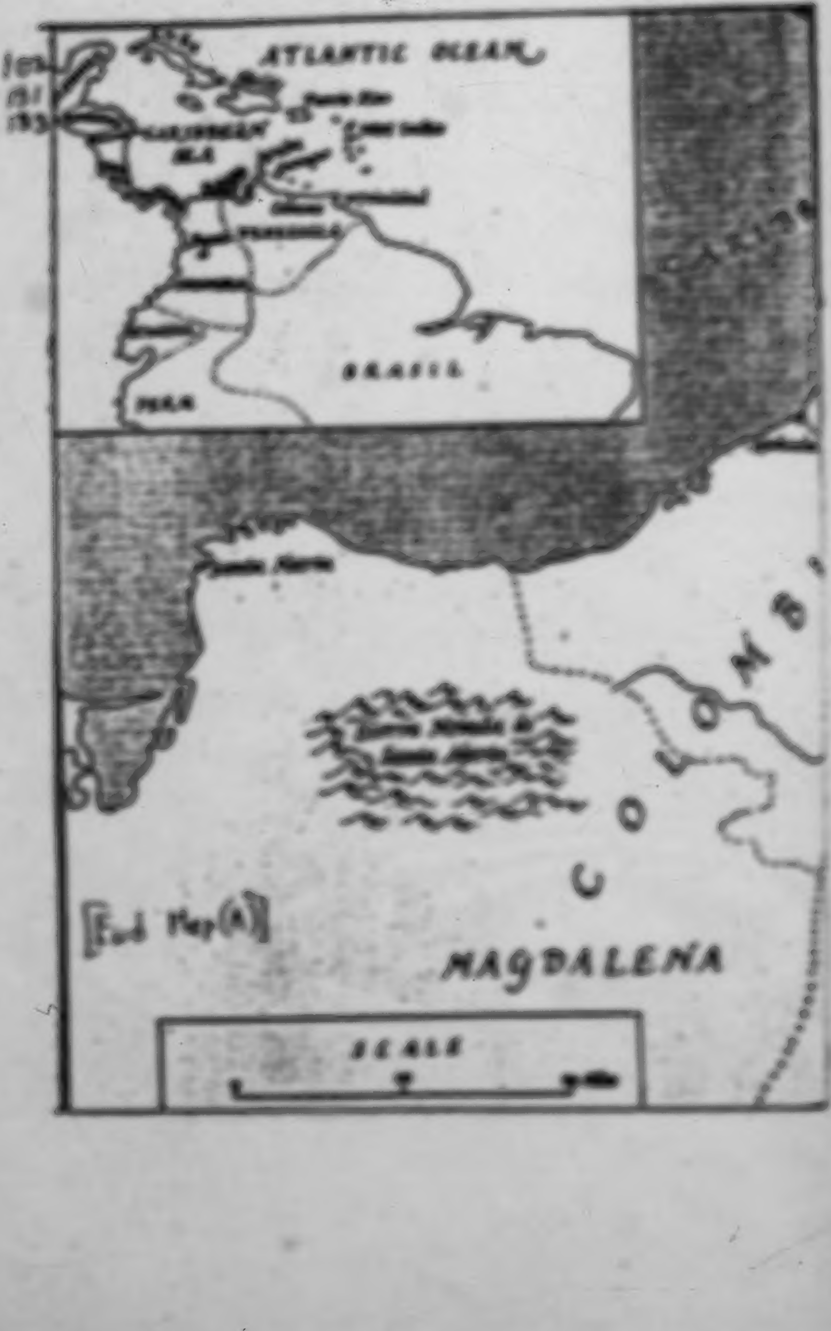
[illegible] [illegible], who represents the Indians at Congress in Caracas

[Facing p. 184]


ATLANTIC OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
BRASIL
PERU
Santa Marta
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
COLOMBIA
MAGDALENA
SCALE

[End Map (A)]

GUAJIRA
VENEZUELA
ZULIA
LAGO DE

[Epd Map (B)]